

# VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

SEPTEMBER 1982

ONE DOLLAR



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Dedicated to the Conservation of Virginia's Wildlife and Related Natural Resources

## Special Hunting Issue

*Our second annual hunting issue, like the first, features 44 pages devoted to a wide scope of hunting topics. We forego our regular departments this month to bring you articles on everything from bowhunting to game cooking to the hunter education program. If you're a waterfowl hunter, a deer hunter, a small game hunter—there's something here for you. Consult the special section for this year's hunting outlook, harvest figures for the state, news of upcoming events for hunters and other information and tips.*

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Whitetailed deer by Lloyd, B. Hill, Memphis, Tennessee.  
Back cover: National Hunting and Fishing Day is September 25. Painting "Father and Son" by Guy Crittenden, Gloucester. See page 2d for details.

# Special Section

## Editorial

### Help Me Be A Good Hunter

by Garvey Winegar

Lord, I know you're busy watching Voyager fly past Saturn, preoccupied with events in the Mideast, concerned with what man is doing to the earth.

But I hope you'll take a few minutes to listen. I have several small favors to ask. I know you're good at listening, but I'm not very comfortable addressing you directly, so bear with me.

As you know, hunting season is here. For some 16 million of us in the United States alone, this is the most beautiful, the brightest, the best of all your magnificent seasons.

Basically, I want to ask you to help me this season to be the best hunter I possibly can be. I do not necessarily want to kill more game. But I do want to be a better hunter. It might help if I'd be a little more specific.

For starters, help me get out more this fall and winter. My life has become too complex. There are too many deadlines, phone calls, magazines, newspapers, television programs, meetings to attend, too many books to read. The plumbing leaks, the children have problems, the cars don't run right, I slip around like a water bug, hither and yon, running, running, running... and getting nowhere.

Help me set priorities. After 43 years, I should know that the days of life with most memory value are those spent canoeing a river, walking a mountain ridge with a friend and a gun, rediscovering a sunrise beside a lake or in a hardwood forest. But I forget. Remind me of this when I get too bogged down, and help me spend more time outdoors this year.

Lord, help me to be careful. Don't let me shoot anyone. Keep my vanity in check. If it's getting near the end of

season and I haven't killed a deer, don't let me shoot at something that might be a deer, just so I can brag about it to the guys in camp.

Remind me that I can live without killing a deer—I've done it many seasons—but make me think about the horror of accidentally shooting another person, possibly with a close family like my own. I couldn't live with that.

Open my eyes, Lord, to the wealth around me while I'm outdoors. Help me see beyond a bear skin, a turkey beard, a deer rack. Give me eyes to see the intricacy of a milkweed pod, a spider's web right with dew, the perfection of the cap on an acorn. You are responsible for the perfect symmetry of a big buck's rack, but you also wove mystery and beauty in a single raven's feather which hunters often find in the high country. Don't let me overlook either.

And teach me to listen not just for the step of a deer in a carpet of leaves, but for the cry of a hawk, the gabble of geese high overhead, the scream of a bobcat at dusk.

Ah, there is so much to see and hear this fall in Virginia. . . and I am both blind and deaf.



A couple more things, Lord, and you can get back to more pressing matters.

Teach me respect; respect for the game I hunt, respect for the landowner who has worked to buy and hold onto the property on which he has given me permission to pursue my love, respect for the fragile soil that sustains such a wide diversity of wildlife in this part of the world.

This autumn, this hunting season will not come 'round again. Don't let me mess it up with carelessness, with arrogance, with churlishness.

These are Elysian days. . . days of happiness, companionship, discovery, adventure. Future days can be made richer by what happens this fall.

Be with me. Be with us all.

*Reprinted from the Charlottesville Daily Progress.*

### The Outhouse Gobbler

by James T. O'Hare

"Good gosh, what't that!" yelled Fred, as he was literally blasted out of bed. Like old St. Nick, "he flew from his bed to see what was the matter, threw open the sash, when there arose such a clatter" or something like that. But I'm getting ahead of my story.

Several of us had spent four days on a fall turkey hunt on Jack Mountain in Highland County. This area is noted for its turkey population and I maintain a camp there on my Christmas tree farm. The entire farm is surrounded by small fields and timberland, lying on the east fact of Jack Mountain and west of the Bullpasture River.

We had seen a lot of birds during our four-day hunt, but had bagged none. At the end of the fourth day, most of my guests gave up and went home, except Fred.

Somehow, during the night, Fred's enthusiasm for turkey hunting must have departed, too, because when I tried to rouse him before dawn on the fifth day, his "get-up-and-go" had got up and went, and he decided to stay in the warm bed while I took care of the hunting end of things.

When you get right down to it, turkey hunting is a one-man sport anyhow, since we all went our separate ways after breakfast. So I downed my coffee and stepped out of the cabin a couple of minutes before daylight.

It's only a 200 yard walk from my cabin through the Christmas trees before you hit the big woods and an inviting ridge that leads into good turkey country. Of course, I had to make the customary stop at the Johnny House before starting the hunt, a ritual at almost any hunting camp.

Now, my Johnny House isn't just any old Johnny House. Mine has a view. A few months before turkey season opened, I converted a small, spring-fed drainage into a delightful small pond. Ducks had already found it, and you could leave the door open and look for ducks or perhaps see a fish break the water.

During the previous four days of hunting we discovered that the majority of the turkeys were well up on the mountain, feeding on acorns and chinquapins that were scarce that year. I had spotted three old gobblers that, as usual, were staying to themselves up on a ridge just beyond the new pond. I have found that old birds just don't hang around the gangs of young birds, and these old timers are nearly impossible to call up except on rare days. In contrast to the spring, when the gobbler is interested in any little old hen that calls, the gobbler in the fall is independent and extremely wary.

On the cold night before, the old gobblers had roosted high up on the ridge and at the crack of daylight were

ready for a short flight to water below them. As it happened this morning, the closest water from their cold night's roost was my pond, located not more than 40 yards directly in front of the open Johnny House door.

We load our guns shortly after stepping off the porch, since the woods are so close by. As I sat comfortably in the johnny house looking at the pictures in the latest wildlife magazine, my new 12 gauge three-inch Browning was fully loaded and sitting in the corner in front of me. Suddenly one big gobbler decided to sail down the ridge to water. I have been in several awkward positions while hunting—but this was ridiculous!

My only thought was, is the bird close enough for a killing shot and could I pick up the gun and fire before he flew? Other considerations, like my trousers down around my ankles, being enclosed in a small tight building, etc., never crossed my mind. The next 30 seconds were all hunting reflex. The old gobbler took one short drink, backed up, turned and looked straight at me.

I am sure the old bird couldn't believe what he saw! Knowing that my best chance to bag the bird was while he was standing still with his head and neck outstretched, I fired! At that instant, I was sure someone hit me squarely on top of the head with a hammer. After recovering my senses about half way, I realized I had done the wrong thing by firing a big three-inch, 12-gauge Browning in a small enclosure. I saw the bird flapping on the ground by the pond and realized that a shot bird must be retrieved quickly. I charged down the hill, shotgun in my right hand while attempting to retrieve my trousers and long johns with the left hand.

This was the sight that greeted Fred when he threw open the sash. His only remark was, "I see it, but I don't believe it." □



## Turkey Calling Contest

The Virginia State Turkey Calling Contest begins at 11:00 a.m. on Sunday, September 19, and the Mid-Atlantic Championship follows at 3:00 p.m. It all takes place at James Wood High School off Route 50 west of Winchester.

Besides the two competitions, the day's highlights include appearances by Harold Knight and David Hale, call manufacturers and champion callers, and David Harbour, contributing editor to *Sports Afield* and noted author. Displays at this year's event will include presentations by various conservation groups, artists, and manufacturers. Registration is from 9:00 a.m. to 10:45 a.m.



# What is a Concealed Weapon?

by Stephanie Slahor

The preface of this article must be that in a feature such as this, only generalizations can be made as they concern what is meant by "concealed" weapons, and what the hunter and target shooter must know about this subject.

In other words, if you have any specific questions, you must seek your own state and local statutes and ordinances applicable to your setting. Your county's law library, a large public library, the Game Commission, or your local law enforcement agencies should be able to help you learn the precise law for your locale.

In general, however, enough has happened within the law to make the topic one where you can inform yourself of the essentials to help you avoid any criminal charges of carrying a concealed weapon.

First of all, the concept of movement or "locomotion" of the person really doesn't mean as much as it once did. So having a concealed weapon while standing or sitting can be enough to be charged with "carrying."

Second, the concept of "carrying" is not limited to actually "wearing" the firearm such as in a belt or shoulder holster. "Carrying" has also been extended to such things as a firearm in a purse, paper bag, lunch box, saddle bag, etc. The courts usually apply the test of whether the firearm was within the easy grasp and control of the person.

Third, "concealment" usually relates to whether the firearm is visible in ordinary observation. The hunter or target shooter must take care that clothing does not even accidentally cover the firearm. For example, a jacket may be covering a waist or hip holster. So you must position your holster and your clothing in such a way to avoid having the hemline cover the firearm. Shoulder holsters or waist/belt holsters can be worn on the outside of clothing.

Fourth, "concealment" has been applied to situations where body position was such that the firearm was not visible. Sitting or standing in some position where the firearm is visible from one side, but not from another, could result in being charged with concealment. Be sure that your firearm is worn in a fully visible place.

Next, when transporting a firearm in a car or truck, it must be far enough from the driver that it is not within easy reach, i.e. breaking the firearm down into two or three parts and "scattering" these parts in various parts of the vehicle, but never on yourself. Put the parts in the trunk, inside a locked box, or other places out of reach.

When transporting a firearm on such modes of transportation as a horse, snowmobile, boat, motorcycle, etc., either break it down, or stow it with its action

open and unloaded.

In some jurisdictions, courts have ruled that a firearm in a vehicle is possessed by all the people in that vehicle. That means, each person could be charged with the offense. However, the courts will bear in mind whether the others really knew that someone had the firearm in concealment or secret, thus leaving them unaware of the fact.

Very often, criminal intent plays an important part in whether there can actually be a conviction for concealment of a firearm. Intent may not be presumed if you could prove that you were on your way to or from a hunt or range, or the gunsmith, etc. But even so, there are some cases which state that if the gun is concealed, criminal intent is assumed. So don't take chances.

On your own property, you may be able, under your laws, to conceal the firearm. But that does mean your own property. It can't be concealed on the floor above your apartment, on the public driveway, or sidewalk outside your place, etc.

So don't jeopardize your freedom by taking chances. The topic of what is a concealed weapon is a foggy area of the law. You must be careful. Learn your own laws and those of the hunting area you'll be visiting. Heed what you learn to avoid problems. □



National  
Hunting  
&  
Fishing  
Day®

September 25, 1982

## Our Back Cover Artist

This month's back cover painting of two duck hunters—"Father and Son"—is the work of a talented young man from Gloucester named Guy Crittenden. Now a junior at the College of William and Mary, Guy is a celebrated defensive end on the W & M football team.

Guy's work was among the most popular auctioned at the Williamsburg Ducks Unlimited banquet last fall. In fact, Virginia DU will carry the back cover painting to the national DU convention in Reno, Nevada.

Guy's paintings are handled exclusively by the Mustard Seed art gallery in White Stone. For information on obtaining paintings or prints contact Betty Lawton at the Mustard Seed, White Stone, Virginia 22578, phone (804) 435-6060.



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Nell Bolen

# A Roar of Wings

Deer, woodcock, ducks, all had contributed to an exciting and fruitful fall hunting season, but the majestic ruffed grouse still presented the biggest thrill.

by Gerald Almy

**T**he autumn had been a rich one for this hunter.

The season began with heavy flights of doves. And though there was little corn cut in early September, by concentrating on weed fields, shots were offered at many of the fleet-winged gray birds.

Bow hunting had been mostly an exercise in "nature appreciation," as usual, but scattergunning for ducks soon made up for the lack of shots at whitetails. Hundreds of woodies were flocked in the Shenandoah Valley along the river, tributary streams, sloughs, and ponds scattered throughout the fertile bottomland. Enough came to the bag during the early October season for several tasty meals. There were mallards, too, and a few stray blue-winged teal.

Woodcock season opened early that fall, like northern Virginia hunters had been hoping it would, and birds were thick in the coverts for several delightful weeks. Early squirrel hunting yielded a scrumptious Brunswick stew, and on one very productive day across the border in West Virginia, a seven-point buck succumbed. Later in the winter, a trip to Back Bay brought a mixed bag of gadwall, green-winged teal, mallard, coot, ruddy duck, and pintail to our party.

Still, I couldn't help being struck by the irony of the situation. Here is a hunter who considers himself first and foremost a grouse fanatic. But in spite of the superb hunting the Old Dominion had offered over the previous three months, I had yet to bag a ruffed grouse in my home state as of mid-December! And grouse live less than a hundred yards from my front porch in Shenandoah County.

It wasn't from a paucity of birds. Grouse were on the rise. Studies by game biologist Joe Coggin and cooperating hunters had shown it. My own ramblings through the woods had



Spike Knuth

*(Preceding page) Ruffed grouse drumming. (Above) The hunter heads for his downed quarry.*

confirmed it. After an alarming rise in the proportion of adult hens to immature birds bagged, the 1977 season had shown the concrete results of a good hatch and survival of young birds to the fall hunting season. Though no one can be sure, the shortened hunting season (January 31 closing date, instead of February 15) and reduced bag limit, two birds a day instead of three, may have been at least partially responsible for the upswing.

I resolved then and there to break the drought. After a three-hour session behind the keys of the typewriter, I donned the game vest, stuffed its pockets with a dozen 1-and- $\frac{1}{8}$ -ounce loads of No. 8's, and grabbed the ancient scattergun resting above the bookshelf in the living room. It was 10:30 a.m. and outside the skies were leaden. The weatherman spoke of rain, but the air had the "feel" of snow. Winds were dead calm, and temperatures hovered in the upper 30's. A perfect day for hunting.

I walked a hundred yards down the gravel road and soon felt the soft rustling crunch of dry leaves beneath the worn leather boots. The woods renewed a spirit sagging from too much time spent indoors. In the forest I felt at home as I took up the role of the predator and re-entered the natural world from which so many of us have completely divorced ourselves.

It is good to hunt, I thought. By hunting, I become a part of a world which the hiker, the photographer, the tourist can only view from the outside. By taking up a firearm and pursuing an untamed animal, I become an element in the cycle of life and death that governs life in the wild. By taking up the role of the fox, the hawk, the cougar, I affirm that death is a natural, wholesome, and necessary part of the wilderness.

A fresh deer trail made my passage through the underbrush easier, but I soon busted back into the thick cover, feeling I had a better chance to flush a bird that way. There was honeysuckle wrapped in massive tangles, clinging grapevines, young sapling growth and a few cedars and Virginia pines—perfect habitat for ruffed grouse.

When hunting grouse without a dog—as I was—the two most difficult aspects of the sport are being ready to shoot instinctively and quickly when a bird gets up, and being sure that you don't walk past birds that are reluctant to flush. The first item—being able to shoot rapidly with only a flush of wings for warning—is mainly a matter of practice and steady nerves. Suffice to say, after a few years in the grouse thickets you may be passable at this task. A light gun (under seven pounds) and quick reflexes to begin with are also a big help.

Making sure you don't walk by skulking birds—the second major task the dogless hunter faces—can be largely solved with a few tricks of the trade. The best technique consists of walking through the cover slowly and stopping frequently when you suspect a bird could be hiding in some blowdown or snag of grapevines. Almost without exception this will flush birds that otherwise would let you walk right past them. The grouse associates danger with this pausing behavior because most predators crouch towards their prey then stop momentarily to "load" their muscles for the final springing leap and attack when they are close enough to catch their prey.

Putting this technique to work, I paused near a likely looking brushpile on that overcast December morning and waited expectantly. Almost the second I stopped, a young cock grouse leapt from the brush and veered curving through the trees. Without thinking, I had raised my gun and discharged the first shell.

The bird crumpled in mid-air and fell cleanly to the brown forest floor. I was stunned. The flush and shot had come so quickly that I hadn't even had time to think. Pure instinct had brought down the bird.

Elated, I gathered the grouse, stroked and admired its exquisite feathers. After drawing the bird with a small branch, I stashed him in the vest and continued my trek through the winter woods.

Soon I came across two- or three-day-old turkey scratchings in the still hollow. Sweet memories drifted back of a large hen bagged not far from there the year before. "Tomorrow I will return garbed in camouflage," I vowed, "and bag a big bird for Christmas."

Still further down the foothills of the Massanutten Mountain Range, I heard the vague, muted stomping of cloven feet and knew I had startled a whitetail somewhere, though I couldn't see the deer. Again, memories overtook the present: the three years I had spent scouting, hunting, and being frustrated by the deer of this mountainside. The cold, seemingly endless waits for bucks at various stands along the ridge and hollow. The culmination with a hefty buck succumbing to a single shot through the heart.

But grouse were the quarry today. I wrenched myself back into the present, studied the ground ahead, and picked a route towards a thicket of pines and fallen timber where I almost always moved a bird. There was hesitancy, though. True, I wanted to flush more grouse, to experience that exquisite contact with this wild bird. But I wasn't sure I wanted to kill another grouse.

Many are the times I've called a halt to trips after a single bird has tumbled. To me, taking a grouse is a very moving experience. There is sometimes a vague feeling that by shooting another bird on that day, I will be diminishing the intensity of meaning that bagging the first grouse had.

Also, I am extremely careful with the numbers of birds in my home coverts. If I take a cock grouse, I'll usually continue to hunt. A hen, and I worry. If the harvested bird is a mature hen, I'll almost always cease hunting for the day in that area. Sometimes after shooting a grouse I will continue to hunt to see how abundant the birds are, deciding in this manner whether I should take another.

Today I was in just such a state of uncertainty as I approached the choice holding lie with one fat cock bird already bulging from my vest. Halfway through the mass of cover I had yet to move a grouse. I thought, almost relieved, that my mind would be made up for me.

But no, it wouldn't be. Forty yards away the unmistakable sound of grouse wings pounding the air rose from the ground. Ten yards beyond that, I caught sight of the bird and watched it disappear in the next hollow. Even as I stared, another grouse followed suit, flushing from the same spot in the tangle of fallen trees. I rose my gun this time, but knew the bird was too far for a shot.

Trembling, but elated to have found a pair of grouse, I took a step forward and a third grouse erupted from the bed of pine needles, angling up the adjacent hollow. By now I was nearly laughing at myself as these grouse made a fool of me by getting up just out of range. I looked to the spot from which they had flown and sure enough, a fourth bird was standing there, erect and quivering as he prepared nervously for takeoff. In an instant he was airborne, arching majestically through the stark woods.

Four birds! A grouse convention. Gathering my wits and calming my nerves as best I could, I took off in hot pursuit of the brown gamebirds. Rounding a knoll, I heard two of the wily creatures take off from 80 to 90 yards out, but couldn't detect them. A blowdown up the gut yielded another flush, but the bird cannily flew low behind thick brush before landing halfway up a ridge too steep to climb.

I hunted the area more, but couldn't flush another grouse. One last incline looked slightly promising for one of the quartet to be holding on, but it was terribly steep. I cringed, took a deep breath, and began the climb—for it was, not a hike. Finally I scampered to a spot where I could stand flat on both feet and paused to catch my breath.

With a roar of wings a grouse flew from a perch on a tree branch to my left. The bird flinched as my shot charge flew and collapsed to the thick bed of leaves with a final fluttering of wings.

I paused, looked up at the pale gray skies above the mountain. A few minutes later I retrieved the downed grouse. It was another young bird, a hen. The hatch had been a good one in the mountains that spring. There would be ample birds to mate the following year.

It was noon. Two shots had been fired, two birds bagged. I smiled inside and walked back to the cabin perched above the shimmering river.

The grouse drought had been broken. □

*Gerald Almy is a regular contributor to Virginia Wildlife as well as many other outdoor magazines. He lives in Woodstock.*

At one time I had to be the most disappointed rabbit hunter in Virginia.

I brought two young beagle hounds with me from Oklahoma to my new home here. For those of you who have never hunted there, let me tell you this: Oklahoma and rabbits go together like Virginia and ham. In Oklahoma you simply go to your hunting spot, turn out your dogs, and shoot your limit or run out of shells. During my first winter in Virginia, I tried the same techniques and learned two things: I was going to learn a new way to hunt rabbits, and my hounds were going to have to learn the difference between deer and rabbits.

By my second winter, I had located a hunting partner willing to acquire a few beagles and join me in the chases. Bradley was the local quail hunter who knew all the nearby farmers and had some Virginia rabbit savvy. Quail hunting was getting slower in his area and perhaps Bradley was, too.

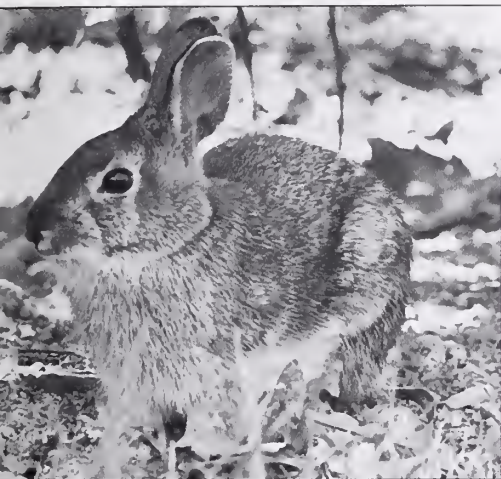
# Sadder But Wiser

A newcomer learns  
the hard way that  
you don't hunt  
rabbits in Virginia  
the way you do in  
Oklahoma.

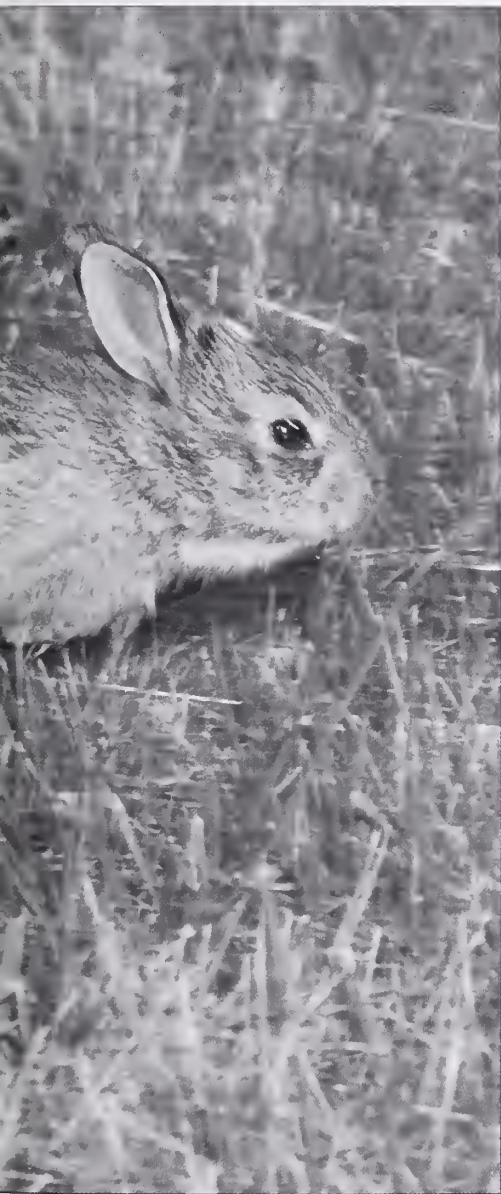
by Larry Hart



Leonard Lee Rue



Leonard Lee Rue



*If you learn to spot the elements that make up good rabbit habitat like the presence of a berry patch (left), your chances for success with cottontails increase.*



In any event, he didn't mind making his bird dogs share their pens with the rabbit hounds, nor listening to a little beagle music.

My first lesson toward improving my Virginia rabbit hunting experience was to realize I would have to walk for the rabbits. We would take our half-dozen dogs and plan to cover some distance each day. We found small areas where rabbits were plentiful, with long, barren distances between. Contrary to my previous hunting experience, we moved along at a fairly fast pace until we or the dogs jumped a rabbit. After the disposition of the jumped rabbit had been determined, we searched the immediate area for others. As often as not, we would find them in the immediate vicinity. If our search proved fruitless, we considered the rabbit a single and moved on.

After using the hit-and-run technique for a few months, we began to recognize good rabbit habitat. We learned that Virginia rabbits like steep southern slopes with good cover. We guessed that was because the air warmed a little faster there since the sun's rays struck at a lesser angle. Good cover consisted of any weeds or grass that would stand off the ground deep enough to hide rabbits. Combinations of honeysuckle and briars on a steep southern slope meant thorough trampling. If cultivated land was within a few hundred yards, especially if the land was planted in alfalfa or corn, the odds improved. The last ingredient for the magic rabbit brew was the presence of houses. For some unexplained reason, we found more rabbits in the vicinity of occupied houses. We were careful not to shoot toward a house nor anywhere too close to it, but we did find more rabbits nearby. Trails from the house dogs often criss-crossed our most productive rabbit grounds. Occupants of the houses sometimes invited us to remove some of the rabbits frequenting their gardens.

You are probably saying to yourself that the place I have described exists in very few, isolated places. You're right; that's what makes them real rabbit producers. Since we cannot always hunt in the best spots, we have to settle for something less. If you can find a place with any combination of the above, your chances for success improve. Perhaps all you can find is honeysuckle and briars next to a corn field or in an old cut-over area. While you have not found the best spot, it is better than most and requires some attention before you put your legs in high gear to see what lies around the bend. In Bedford County, where most of my rabbit hunting takes place, we find that branches or creeks running in an east-west direction provide the good southern exposures. Our best place is a few miles of abandoned railroad right-of-way that run in the proper direction through several farms. We can always expect a good hunt along the old railroad.

Now you know where to find the rabbits. You still have to move them and shoot them before you can eat them. Though I have had successful days without rabbit dogs, those times don't compare with the ones when I've hunted with dogs. When Muddy, Bimbo, Bigfoot, Sam, and Man hit the briars, something is going to move. We hope it will be a rabbit since our dogs are supposed to be rabbit hounds. Sometimes it is a deer and we have to wonder about them. They are basically rabbit dogs: they seem to want to run rabbits but will revert to anything that will run from them if a rabbit isn't around. The key to making the dogs behave is to get them after a rabbit first. They seem to keep their minds on rabbits more that way, but if the first thing they jump is a deer, all the gold in California can't stop them.

Another problem I face is the inability to make a good shot in the dense cover where we are required to hunt. The range of visibility is often so short that when you see the rabbit, it is too close to shoot with a shotgun without tearing it in half, if you hit it at all. The proper distance shots continue to present themselves which leaves me in the position of needing two guns. I hope to remedy the problem this fall by using a double barrel shotgun with a 410-gauge tube in one of the barrels. The 410 tube is an insert about 10 inches long that slides down inside the bore of a larger shotgun and fires a 410 shell. The shot exits from the tube, then the pattern expands as it travels down the larger barrel, giving a widely scattered pattern. The second barrel will hold a normal load for normal range shooting and close distances. Preliminary tests indicate success if I can remember which barrel to fire in which situation.

After you have found the rabbits and shot them, it is time to clean them. I prefer to field dress rabbits while they are fresh. Just after the kill, I skin and dress the rabbit, place it in a plastic bag, and then in my hunting coat. This method removes weight, provides a few tidbits for the dogs to maintain their interest in rabbits, allows me to dress the rabbit while the odors are not strong, and eliminates the need for a cleaning session at the end of the day when I'm tired and it's dark. If the day is cold, I usually remove the game from my coat at noon and when I am finished for the day. If the day is warm I return to the truck immediately to put the meat on ice and prevent spoilage. I also carry a pair of plastic gloves to perform the field dressing to keep my hands clean and reduce the chance of catching rabbit fever.

Virginia rabbit hunting is much tougher than what I was accustomed to in Oklahoma. However, the folks you meet are just as nice and the beagle music just as sweet. After all, these are some of the finer things of any hunt. □

*Larry Hart is chief of the lands and engineering division at the Game Commission and an avid rabbit hunter.*

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by Bob Gooch

Maybe you've never considered it before,  
but it's the choice spot to find whitetails:

# At the Fork Of the Creeks

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John Ebeling

“Deer hounds.” Joe and I twisted our heads slightly to pick up the distant sounds of a chase, but satisfied with my father-in-law’s explanation, we went back to the more serious business of kicking rabbits out of the clumps of broom sedge that dotted the little lowland pasture. It had been a good hunt, but we hoped to bag another couple of cottontails before calling it a day.

Our own little beagle hounds were ranging the countryside, but it was highly unlikely they would wander off that far.

The meadow was a point of flat pastureland between a pair of gurgling creeks that joined forces there. From that confluence a suddenly bigger creek raced toward the river. I was working slowly toward that point, the fork of the creeks, when a movement at the point caught my eye.

I was dumfounded!

There not twenty-five yards away, staring at me over the creek bank, was a handsome whitetail deer, a good buck with a magnificent spread of antlers! That staring session must have lasted a few seconds at the most, but a hundred thoughts raced through my mind. I had a clear shot at the

head and neck, all of the animal that was visible, but I was armed with a shotgun and size 6 shot. Still, the range was short.

Suddenly the old scattergun was at my shoulder, and I was squeezing the trigger.

Boom!

The deer dropped from sight, and my hunting partners, startled, looked up to see what I was shooting at. My father-in-law quickly sized up the situation and his glance picked up the big buck bounding away down the creek.

“Hey Joe what a buck!”

Again, all kinds of thoughts were racing through my mind. Was the deer hit? Should I have shot at him with that light load? Would he run off and die? Today, I would not have taken that shot, but that was years ago—and I was yet to bag a deer. We found the animal a hundred yards down the creek. At the extremely close range the load of number sixes had done the job.

I learned a couple of things from that experience. One was not to shoot deer in front of your rabbit hounds. You risk making deer hounds out of them. But more importantly, I began to ponder over the value of a fork of the creeks as a deer hunting hot spot.

The hunter who takes a stand in the fork of a pair of creeks improves his chances. Deer like the options those two creeks offer.



Deer were just beginning their dramatic comeback in the Old Dominion that distant winter day, but that experience and the handsome rack that still looks down at me from the wall made a deer hunter of me. Before the next November rolled around I had purchased a light 30/30 carbine, fitted it with crude peep sights, and sighted it in using a big pile of earth in my backyard for a backstop.

**L**ong before sunrise on opening day, I was on a stand overlooking that fork in the creeks and awaiting legal shooting time. I had a deer a couple of hours later, but not before I had deserted my stand and moved slowly down the stream below the fork and surprised a 9-pointer slipping quietly along a pine-covered cliff that sloped to the creek. The season limit was one then, so my deer hunting ended early that year.

I was unable to meet the opening hour the next season, but later that afternoon I was back at my favorite creek fork, concealed in some rough cover that overlooked a trail leading out of the woods and into the little meadow between the creeks.

Dusk was gathering and legal hunting time was precious short when my eyes picked up three deer moving slowly down the trail toward the field! Undisturbed, a deer can be

painfully slow, stopping frequently to study the trail ahead, munching at browse—never in a hurry. Frantically, my gaze shot back and forth between the approaching deer and my wristwatch.

Eventually, the animals disappeared in the rough cover near the edge of the field, and I was ready when one ventured into the field. My new rifle did its job well, and suddenly I felt like a big game hunter.

The next opening day I was back at the fork of the creeks and high in a tree overlooking that same trail when the new season opened. A couple of hours later I was about ready to give up and climb out of the tree when my eyes picked up a fat doe standing about thirty yards away. The deer seemed to suddenly materialize from nowhere. Antlerless deer were legal on opening day that year, and again my trusty 30/30 did its job.

I almost missed that deer though. Inexperienced, I neglected to compensate for the fact that a rifle shoots high when the angle is down. I shot high, but my bullet chipped the animal's spine. It died instantly.

That deer brought a temporary halt to my fork-of-the-creeks hunting experiences. I got my venison on the banks of a big river the next year, and then my interests began to drift



Lou Hinselwood

away from deer. For a few years, quail, turkeys, and waterfowl seemed to claim most of my hunting time, though deer herds were continuing to mushroom. I took an occasional deer, but not like I had during the half-decade I hunted that fork of the creeks.

Then a few years ago a neighbor invited me to join him and some friends for the opening day of the deer season. He had built sturdy tree stands all over his place and assigned me one not far from my home.

"You will be within walking distance of your house," he said.

I spent a fruitless three hours on that stand, and gave up about mid-morning to go for a cup of coffee. My route took me by the fork of the creeks that had been so good to me years before.

Lo and behold, as I approached that little meadow wedged between the pair of creeks I spooked a half dozen deer that bounded away up the far creek. I didn't attempt a shot at the running deer. At least one was a buck, but I didn't want to chance a wild shot that might hit a doe.

I raced ahead, however, so I could see up the creek in the direction the deer had made their escape. And there they were, about a hundred yards away, milling around!

Quickly, I dropped to the ground. I thought I could see antlers on one deer off from the rest. By then I was shooting a .243 topped with a 4-power scope, and the scope revealed a good 6-pointer. Flat on my belly, my aim was steady and I squeezed the trigger. The deer bolted. Puzzled, I got off another shot and this time it hit the ground.

I have since taken another buck from the creeks fork, that time just as the season was running out, and I was resigned to a year without venison in my freezer. That one came in behind me and was nosing through a light blanket of snow when I happened to glance over my shoulder.

I like to reminisce. I hope it is not a sign of age, but those hunts in the fork of the creeks have taught me a thing or two about deer.

Let's examine them.

Creeks and streams are among the deer's favorite travel lanes. They offer easy, often unobstructed, movement. Over the years, man has also used them for his own travels, first when he was a wilderness traveler, and later when he built his roads and highways. Streams follow the natural routes through the hills.

Deer use streams for travel within their limited home territory and as escape routes—and the forks of creeks offer them options. They can use the one that offers the smallest risk.

That buck that surprised me many years ago was probably using the creek to escape the hounds we heard in the distance. Possibly he was trying to decide which creek to follow as he peered over the bank to study those strange creatures in the meadow.

Obviously, the hunter who takes a stand in the fork of a pair of creeks improves his chances. Deer like the options those two creeks offer.

My second deer probably intended to use that creek also. He was slowly working his way from the hills and headed toward the fork of the creeks. I met him head-on and was successful, but my chances would likely have been just as

good had I remained on my stand between the two creeks.

Though deer generally like to bed down in high country, they are drawn to the lowlands for food and water. The vegetation is richer and the creeks provide an unlimited source of clean drinking water. A fork of creeks offers more of both—a pair of little valleys rich in food and a couple of creeks to drink from.

Those deer I waited out the third year were moving from their daytime bedding area in the hills to the fork of the creeks for food and water. They probably drank from the little stream they had to cross before venturing into the field and offering me my chance.

The whitetail I took late in the morning of my fourth season was not acting in the more typical manner. Deer generally bed down in high country, but not always. That deer had obviously been feeding somewhere in the creek bottom and was ready to sleep away the day in a convenient patch of honeysuckle that spread out before my tree stand. Drawn to the fork of the creeks for food and water, it had apparently decided to remain there. Deer also often seek the lowlands for protection from harsh weather.

The nice 6-pointer I spooked en route home was obviously using the creek as an escape route. Those deer were not unduly alarmed, but had apparently been frightened by dogs or another hunter.

My most recent fork-of-the-creeks buck was also working his way out of the hills for an early morning breakfast in the meadow between the creeks. I simply intercepted him. It had been a stormy night, one that had dumped a couple of inches of snow on the ground. The deer had not fed heavily during the night.

While deer use creeks and streams as escape routes they use the water for another reason. The water neutralizes the animal's strong odor, making it impossible for hounds to follow its trail. Wise old bucks are well aware of this, and often run through creeks, or swim lakes, ponds, or rivers for this reason.

But there is still another reason why the fork of the creeks often produces good deer hunting—and it has more to do with the hunter than the hunted.

Man has been drawn to creek forks since he first began to walk on this earth. Long before there were roads and highways the forks of creeks were wilderness crossroads. Hunters and trappers knew where they were and used them in discussing their adventures with other outdoorsmen.

Even in the high country there is often a bit of flat land at the confluence of creeks. It is a tempting place to pitch a tent, build a little campfire, and bed down for the night. There is something aesthetically pleasing about such places where the waters drained from widely separated regions join forces to form a bigger stream. They are a part of our outdoor heritage, and because they are we are drawn to them. Because we are we hunt them more often. The law of averages works in favor of the creek forks.

Maybe the deer are also drawn to these places for the same aesthetic reasons. Deer and hunters share a love for the choice places in the outdoors—and they meet there.

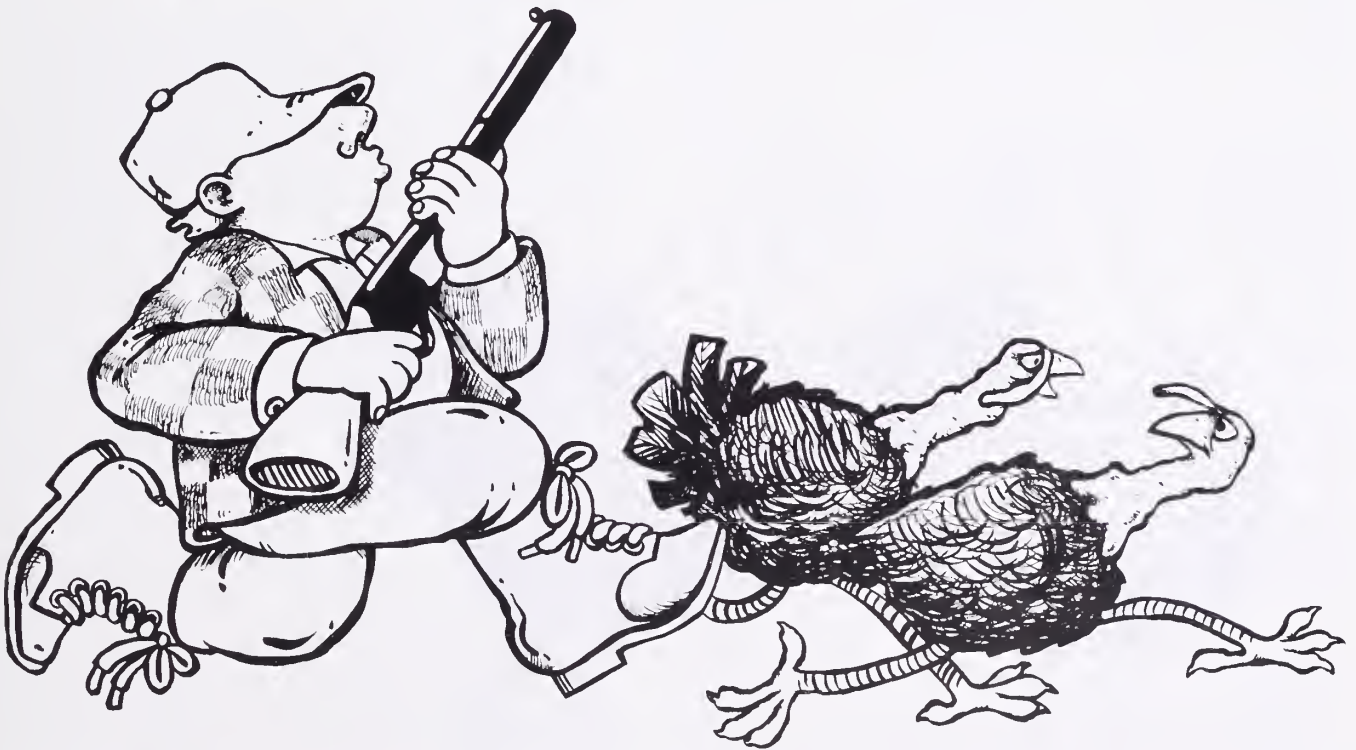
Rationalizing is fun, but bagging a big buck is more so, and a fork of the creeks is a good place to do so. □

*Bob Gooch writes a syndicated column on hunting and fishing and regularly writes for Virginia Wildlife. He lives in Troy.*

by Joel M. Vance

# FALLING FOR TURKEYS

Some unorthodox methods for capturing the king of game birds.



illustrations by Martin Rhodes

Yes, officer, I can understand how the neighbors might be concerned, but if you'll just get your knee off my neck and let me spit out the dirt clods, I'll explain why an apparently normal, middle-aged man with a mortgage as heavy as his beltline would run screaming into the yard, waving his hands and firing a shotgun in the air.

I was practicing.

No, not for an urban riot.

Actually, you see, I was practicing for the fall turkey hunt. Next, I'm going to work on my kee-kee run. . . What's that, Officer? Handcuffs? Now, that's not necessary! But, Officer! Help!

There are outings you look forward to, outings that are balm to the careworn spirit, that if they don't happen the disappointment is almost unbearable. Remember when Nikita Krushchev banged his shoe on the table at the United Nations in childish petulance after he was refused a trip to Disneyland?

Personally, I wouldn't walk across the street to Disneyland to see Mickey Mouse assault Donald Duck with a bicycle chain, but we each have our enthusiasms and I can understand Nikita's frustration. The old turkey woods where we hunt is my Disneyland and I'd probably hold my breath until I turned blue if I didn't get to hunt there.

A couple of days camped in those sun-spattered woods does more to jerk the knots out of my exacerbated ganglions than six weeks of counseling at a Park Avenue nut ranch. I remember the first time I hunted turkeys in the fall. I trudged into the woods, a broken warrior, suffering battle fatigue from the combat of life. Three days later (minus a turkey, but who worries about details?) I sprinted from those woods, glossy of coat, sleek from a heavy diet of grease-fried camp

food, rediscovered youth in my step, healthy tone in my normally flaccid muscles, vigor in my whole outlook, ready again to grapple with the implacable forces of Technology, the endless programmers who punchcard our lives and fold, spindle and mutilate us all.

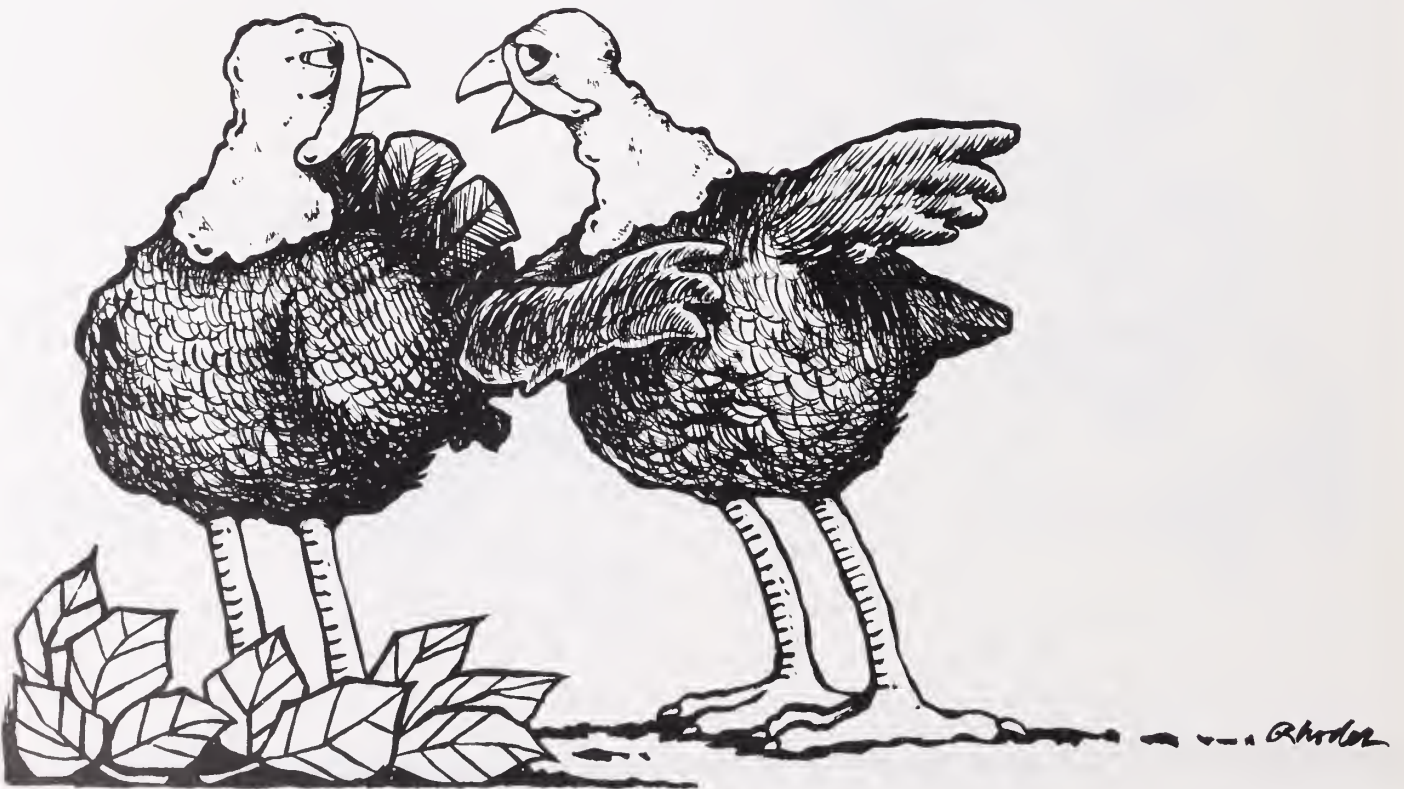
I owe it all to the kee-kee run, a turkey call that sounds like something you train toddlers to do.

Actually, fall turkey hunting is as different from what is practiced in the spring as Ms. Bo Derek is from the average mother swine. In the spring, you catch the ear of a gobbler whose Mama Sweetbeak has just sent him a Dear Tom letter and you lure him to you with yelped promises of raptures only dimly imagined, then you ambush him with a load of No. 4 shot. A dirty trick, but who said life was fair?

In the fall, yon gobbler is filled with haughty disdain for you and your vulgar promises, so he won't come, no matter how heavy you breathe. The answer is to find a flock of turkeys, usually a mother bird and her pimple-faced kids, run screaming and shouting into the middle of them (some advocate firing a gun in the air) to create such panic and confusion that the birds flush in all directions. Then you call them back with the afore-mentioned kee-kee run, a call that sounds as if the bird has a sizeable hex nut stuck in his throat.

In fall hunting, you try to find an area that turkeys have used because, as opposed to the spring where you call and the turkey (understand, this is all theory on my part, but then Einstein never saw an atom either) comes to you; in the fall, you go to the turkeys.

So you look for areas that appear to have been used for the Leaf Kicking Olympics. Then you sit in a quiet place and listen for turkey talk.





The turkey, as he feeds, makes a lot of little sounds which are the equivalent of, "Let's see. . .that looks like a pretty nice acorn. . .oh, darn, it has a worm in it! Well, here's a patch of stuff I think I'll kick over. Getting cooler, don't you think, Mabel? How're the kids..." and so on. They're called pitts and putts and purrs and clucks and why not? They're soft enough that most people won't pick them out of the woodland background noise, but the tuned-in hunter hears them, realizes that turkeys are nigh, and races to a vantage point where he will find: (a) he went the wrong way; (b) there is another hunter already there; (c) he left his gun in the car; (d) he left his shells in the car; (e) his 12-gauge shells won't go in his 16 gauge gun; (f) he is sitting in what, on closer inspection, turns out to be where a cow with an upset stomach (four times) paused to reflect on life.

Aside from the kee-kee run, hunters can use the lost yelp, a series of panicky, ascending yelps that, in essence, say, "Oh, my gosh, I'm lost and won't some chubby turkey, preferably large and tender, come and help me!"

The fall turkey woods is entirely different from that of the spring. In the spring, you're dealing with a tired old forest just waking up from a long, hard sleep and looking frazzled. The trees are hazed with green from new buds and look out-of-focus. But in the autumn, those same leaves are going to their glory and are expiring in a blaze of color before twirling to earth among their millions of fellows.

If all goes well, you can hit the peak of the fall color change, a moment as ephemeral as the fleeting life of a gauze-winged mayfly. And the crispness of autumn is fine wine, light on the soul, but with lingering body and gentle persuasion.

Even though most people get up before dawn in the fall,

most don't do it in a woods overlain with a mesh of stars that are invisible to inhabitants of even the smallest town because of the persistent haze of fugitive light from homes, stores, and streetlights.

There is peace and solitude in the quiet dawn, both hard-to-come-by blessings in a jackhammer society. Birds sing and the air is sweet. Morning hunting isn't the mean hurt of starvation, but a need to be all the more keenly appreciated for being satisfied with batter-dipped mushrooms, like sausage and eggs.

So far we've talked about only one method of hunting turkeys in the fall—that of the hunter running into the flock and scattering it.

Some hunters have dogs trained to do the flock flush. The dog races among the turkeys, barking and carrying on. Just the way my Brittany does when he finds a covey of quail or a pride of rabbits. And I didn't even have to train him to do this.

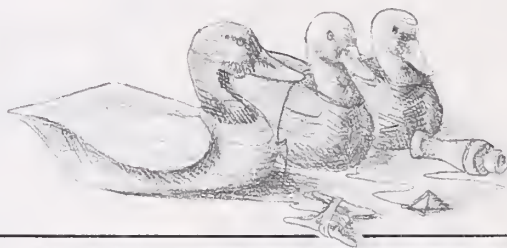
There is a final method that is simplicity itself. It involves no scouting, no endless trekking over hogback ridges and down into gloomy valleys. You don't have to listen for gossiping turkeys, nor even call hopefully into the day.

What you do is sit down in the woods anywhere it looks comfortable and hope a turkey ambles by with a target painted on it. I use this method extensively because it involves absolutely no effort and sleeping gets to occur.

And that pretty well sums up how to kill a wild turkey in the fall. See how easy it was? □

*Joel Vance is on the staff of Missouri Conservationist, and writes extensively for other outdoor magazines. His last contribution to Virginia Wildlife was "All in the Name of Quail," which appeared in last year's special hunting issue (September 1981).*

# In Pursuit of the Wild Goose



Some hunters prefer upland game, others prefer waterfowl. A few like to hunt both types. But for a man who grows up along the creeks and bays of Virginia's Eastern Shore, there could never be any choice.

"If a bird doesn't have webbed feet, it doesn't have me to worry about," says Grayson Chesser, Jr., emphasizing his point by aiming a stream of Levi Garrett in the general direction of an oak stump.

Chesser is 35 and saddle tan from a lifetime of working outdoors. He has a full black beard and eyes that constantly laugh, as if he were just getting to the punch line of a continual joke. He farms during the summer and is a hunting guide during the winter, but his friends say he hunts the year round. Not that he shoots game out of season. Not at all. In fact, he spent eight years as a special Virginia game warden. It's just that most hunters turn their thoughts to fishing as soon as March provides two warm days in a row. Grayson hunts during the season and spends the rest of the year talking about it.

He lives in a spacious, restored Eastern Shore farmhouse in the community of Jenkins Bridge in Accomack County. His den is a waterfowler's museum. A walnut case holds a half-dozen shotguns, an old wooden shotgun shell case serves as a plant stand, a rack holds a collection of outdoor magazines dating from the 1920's and '30's, and there are decoys everywhere.

Grayson is an expert carver who learned the craft as a teenager from the famous wildfowl artist, Miles Hancock of Chincoteague. He says he spent entire afternoons at the shop of the carver, who died in 1974. His collection includes many by Hancock, who gave young Grayson a decoy for every one



Grayson Chesser, Jr.

Bill Sterling

he repainted.

Grayson has a growing reputation as a carver, but his approach is form-follows-function. In an old smokehouse are the tools of his trade: a bandsaw, sander, knives of different sizes and descriptions, and chunks of aromatic cedar and basswood. From a storage shelf over the eaves he brings down a set of wood duck decoys he made for a friend. They will be hunted over for a few seasons, then retired to a bookshelf as collector's items. He has been making his own decoys since he began hunting at 12. It is part of the game, something to occupy the warm months. And buyers appreciate the fact that the decoys have been hunted over.

Grayson tells a story of a well known carver friend of his who goes through a standard ritual each time he goes to a carving show. "He loads the trunk of his car with decoys," Grayson says, "then he gets his shotgun out and shoots over it. Then he drives to the show and tells his customers the

decoys have been shot over."

Although Grayson does some duck hunting, geese are his passion. Last year he went 50 to 55 times, often as a hired guide for out-of-town sports. Although he makes \$60 per person for taking a party out, Grayson says he is not looking for more business. "You can't enjoy hunting when you're working as a guide like you can when you just go out with some friends."

At 35 Grayson is considered one of the best goose hunting guides around. He leases farmland near his home for hunting, and in the marshes behind the barrier island, he built blinds on flyways to the wildlife refuge at Assateague Island.

The seaside blinds, he says, are ideal for hunting snow geese. "I never saw as many geese as I saw last year. You sit in the blind and see this big white cloud on the horizon and you realize the cloud is moving toward you. Then you realize the cloud is snow geese."

The burgeoning population of geese along Virginia's coast is due to an interplay of weather conditions and successful hatches a few years ago, Grayson believes. "When you have hard freezes like we had during the last two or three winters, the goose hunting is great. The birds move further south and they'll stay in our area as long as there is open water. The past two years have been good. Even the oldest hunters I've talked to can't remember anything like that."

Grayson prefers to hunt geese over water, although fields of cut-over corn or tender young wheat can also be productive. "Day in and day out, I do better on the water," he says. "I have a spot on a flight path, plus the birds roost there, so usually we do pretty good."

*Hunting guide Grayson Chesser hunts geese all season  
and spends the rest of the year talking about it.*



*Setting out decoys at sunrise (bottom). Snow goose  
(left).*

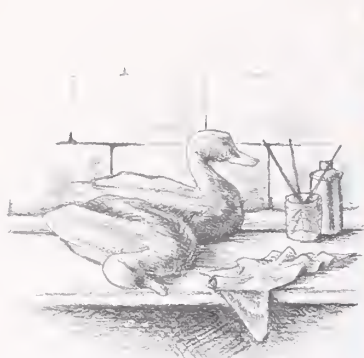






*(Left) Snow goose.  
(Below) Canada Geese.*





Snow geese

"I have a blind at Assawoman Inlet that's good early in the season. We get birds leaving Assateague. Later in the year I move down to Gargatha [farther south on the barrier island chain]."

Grayson's hunting technique is definitely not for the lazy. A typical rig for a goose hunt in the ponds behind the barrier island consists of 90 to 100 goose decoys, and about a dozen duck decoys. Even when hunting in a field, he uses the full-bodied decoys instead of easier-to-handle-silhouettes. He believes the latter spook snow geese, which tend to come in high and circle the decoy spread.

"If hunting was easy, it wouldn't be any fun," Grayson claims. Hunting, to Grayson, is much more than pulling the trigger of his Browning. It is the pleasurable time spent in his smokehouse shaping the perfect black duck decoy, it is working with his two labs, it is studying the birds and learning their feeding habits and flight patterns.

"I wouldn't walk a hundred yards to kill a duck if weren't for decoys and dogs," he says. "The killing part doesn't mean all that much to me. It's seeing the ducks come in over the stools I've made. Ribbons are nice, but the best compliments I can get are watching birds land in my decoys like they were in a refuge."

Although good decoys are an asset, a hunter first has to know where and when to set up his rig. This is something Grayson has been studying since his father introduced him to waterfowl-  
ing 23 years ago.

"I believe that weather is the most important factor in goose hunting," Grayson says. "Geese can sense it when a front is coming through, and they'll feed more and be more active. In cold weather they need to feed more

often, so they are more active when it's cold."

The perfect day to go goose hunting would be a cold day late in the season when the wind is blowing and there is snow or freezing rain. If you can pull yourself away from the hearth and plunge forth into the elements on a day like that, chances are you'll find geese. "Windy days are the best because the geese will come in low," he says. "If they circle high above you, chances are they'll see you no matter how good your blind is. If the wind is blowing, you can predict which direction they'll come from, and if the first flock comes from the East, you can bet that 90 percent of the later flights will come out of the East."

It doesn't take a goose hunter long to learn the effects of weather on the availability of game, but few hunters realize that the moon phases also play an important role. "If there is a full moon, the geese will go into the fields at night and feed, and they'll spend the day out on the water. So if the weather is clear and there is a full moon, you can be pretty sure hunting in the fields will be poor. On days like that you need to hunt the ponds and bays in the barrier island marshes."

One of Grayson's pet peeves is hunters who overshoot a field. "If you have a good field, get in there early and shoot small flocks and get out. If you shoot large flocks, or if you shoot in the field all day, the geese are going to move elsewhere. Shoot early and get out and let them feed."

Grayson says he tries never to let geese see him in the field. "If there are some geese at the far end I'll send the dog to get them up. I won't go myself."

One of the tricks hunters learn by experience is how to estimate range.

Many hunters shoot when the birds are out of range, says Grayson. "If the birds are coming in, let them come. A lot of hunters get nervous and move and flare them too early. A goose is a big bird, and it's deceiving sometimes telling how far off it is."

Most hunters can sympathize with that. Few hunting experiences can quicken your pulse as much as being hunkered down in a goose blind, trying not to move a muscle as a flock of a hundred geese pours out of the sky. You have to experience it to realize how much self control it takes to keep your eye glued to your boots at a time like that. Believe me, it is a magnificent sight. To the frustration of my hunting partners, I usually manage to sneak a look.

Last year, after the season was over, a freeze had locked up most of the creeks and bays along the Eastern Shore, and for a week or so, hundreds of Canada geese were using a cut-over corn field near my home. It became a pleasant ritual each day before work to hike through the woods at dawn to the edge of the field to watch the geese come in. Instead of carrying my shotgun, I carried the binoculars.

One morning it was snowing and the geese floated like ghosts above the field, honking mysterious and beautiful messages to the morning. Now and then a half-dozen birds would droop out of the mist and glide as softly as the snowflakes into the corn stubble. I don't know how many birds came into the field that day, but it was a sight and sound I won't soon forget.

I do know that I was late for work that day. □

*Curtis Badger is a long-time contributor to Virginia Wildlife. A resident of Onley, he is on the staff of the Eastern Shore News.*

by Mike Benedetti

# After the Shot

Blood-trailing may not be the most glamorous element of hunting, but it's certainly one of the most important.



Richard Simms TWRA

**M**onths of bowhunting practice and perhaps even years of patient waiting are down to the last few nerve-racking seconds. You spot a deer silently feeding down the game trail you are on. Memories flash through your mind of the deer in the past that seemingly were going to be venison dinners, but only ended up being gone. The bare spot over the fireplace further testifies to the magical qualities whitetails possess. On he comes—50, 40, 30 yards—and still coming. Finally, he is in your range. The arrow is released, the shot looks perfect. In time too short to measure, a ghostly silence fills the woods. Doubt races through your mind: had a deer even been there?

It may be difficult for you to believe, but what happens next will have as much to do with your having venison dinner or not as all the practice and scouting that preceded the shot.

What could possibly be so important? Your blood-trailing techniques.

Blood-trailing could very well be the most overlooked part of bowhunter preparation. Actually, all hunters, no matter

what their choice of weapon, can greatly enhance their chances of recovering game by learning the basic skills of blood-trailing.

To some, the idea of blood-trailing conjures up images of hurt, crippled animals. To those who anthropomorphize, it may seem like an inhumane, agonizing death for the animal. However, animals have no knowledge of death. An arrowed animal runs by instinct, not from fear of death. I have talked with bowhunters who have actually had animals keep right on feeding after being hit with an arrow. Blood loss is what causes the death of a bowshot animal. The deer loses blood, becomes tired, lies down and succumbs. Nothing more, nothing less happens.

Bowhunters who want to be properly prepared for a hunt should no more set out without knowledge of blood-trailing than they would with dull broadheads.

Some hunters feel they must be part Indian to be good at blood-trailing. Not so; the most important attributes of a good bloodtrailer are patience, and the attitude that any game he hits will be recovered. These characteristics are more a



frame of mind than mystical tracking skills.

**N**ow back to the deer: a hit seemed to be a sure bet. What should you do next? Nothing. That is, don't scream, jump for joy, or fall out of your tree stand. There's a good chance the deer will run off a short distance, then stop to look around. If he does not feel pursued or hear anything alarming, he is very likely to hide near where he is. To scare or push the animal will mean a long trailing job with little or no blood. A lost deer can be the result.

Next, try to recall exactly where your arrow hit the animal. This will be easier if you remember to follow the arrow with your eyes as closely as possible *at the time of the shot*. If your shot hits in the heart/lung area, you have a vital hit. Wait 30 minutes before starting to trail. If a non-vital hit was made, wait two to three hours before starting on the trail. However, if rain is imminent or other conditions that might erase the trail threaten, you cannot afford to wait. Start tracking, but be as quiet and as careful as possible. The deer may be lying a short distance away.



As the deer is running off, watch and listen to it as far as you can. By doing this, you will be able to pick a landmark in the direction in which the animal is traveling. A good landmark can save you much time in getting started on the trail. On a sparse trail, it could mean the difference between finding the deer or losing it. Remember, when you pick your landmark, things look very different from your vantage point in a tree than they do when you're on the ground. Pick a landmark low to the ground: that's where your eyes will be when you climb down.

Wait 30 minutes before moving out of your stand. This will insure that your deer has had a chance to move off a little and settle down. If you had a vital hit, you can start trailing after coming out of your stand. If you have a non-vital hit, wait the required time. When moving from your stand, do not make any unnecessary noise. Avoid talking. As before, you must avoid spooking the deer.

If you don't know the vital organs of a deer or where they are located, you will be at a loss from the beginning. The best way to learn these facts is to take the National Bowhunter

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"The most important attributes of a good blood-trailer are patience, and the attitude that any game he hits will be recovered."

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Education Program. The people who teach these courses can start you out right. At the very least, find an illustration showing the organs and their locations, and study it closely.

**N**ow that you have left your stand, the first thing you should do is find your arrow. Of course, if the deer ran off with it, you can forget that for now, but once on the trail, keep a sharp eye out for it. Your arrow will tell you a great deal about the hit. For instance, bubbles in the blood on the arrow or on the trail indicate a lung shot. Food particles or green matter mixed with blood usually indicates a gut shot, a non-vital hit. But remember the angle of your shot. I once had an arrow go in through the lung and exit from the stomach. When I found the arrow, it had food particles on it. Because it was a close shot and I was positive of the hit, I started on the trail after 30 minutes. I found the deer after about 60 yards of trailing. If you have any doubt about a vital or non-vital hit, wait two to three hours. It's better to lose a little time than your deer. Hair on the arrow also tells you where an arrow hits. Different parts of the body have different types of hair on it. Study a deer and try to pick out these differences. It could help you in determining what kind of hit you have made.

Marking the bloodtrail is of the utmost importance. Leave a marker where blood is found. First mark the spot where the deer was shot. From there, if you have a continuous trail of blood, a marker about every five yards will do. However, if you cannot find a new blood sign while standing at the last blood found, mark the spot where you are. Toilet paper is excellent to use for marking a trail. Small pieces of toilet paper, after becoming wet, will disappear when left in the woods. Trail markers are considered litter and should be removed from the woods. Why mark the trail, you ask? First of all, marking the trail makes it much easier for you to tell the general direction in which the deer is moving. Further, trail marking makes it obvious if a deer is sticking to a particular game trail. This fact helps when you follow a sparse blood trail. Also, if you should lose the trail, you will always have the spot marked where the last blood was found. You will not have to re-find a spot and start over. Obviously this will save time. Trail marking could even save you from losing the last spot altogether. This is especially true when your blood-trailing goes into the evening hours.

Quiet is extremely important while following the trail. Just as before, you should avoid pushing the animal further. As you know, deer have excellent hearing, and can cover plenty of ground in a remarkably short time.

Watch where you put those vibram soles. An ill-placed foot could easily wipe out a spot of blood on a leaf. That spot could well be your last sign for some distance. Move slowly. If there is any way to spot an inexperienced trailer, it's to note who is the fastest mover. Blood-trailing is not a race. Relax and take your time. Slow, cautious movement with eyes constantly searching is what will find your deer.

Signs will not only be left on the ground. Often deer will rub against bushes, trees and other such places. Signs will then appear at about the height of the hit. Insects will often gather on blood for a meal, so keep an eye open for a cluster of insects. Nature wastes nothing. Also, when blood falls to the ground, it tends to splatter and leave "fingers." These fingers, when left, will point in the direction the deer is traveling. As mentioned earlier, deer often follow existing game trails. So take notice if your deer sticks to a certain trail. Another fact

for ridge runners to remember is that deer tend to travel downhill after being hit.

Take note of tracks, overturned leaves and other such signs as you follow the blood trail. If the blood sign should give out or become sparse, you will be able to follow your deer by picking up on these alternate types of signs.

**A** compass can be helpful to you while on the trail and after. Not only will you be able to take a reading of the direction the deer is moving, but you also can keep track of your own movements. It's easy to concentrate so hard on the blood trail that you fail to take note of landmarks for returning. Night-time navigating is particularly tricky. At night, you can see few landmarks even if you remember to check. Marking your blood-trail can help you find your way out, but I think the safest way is to take a compass reading. Imagine dragging a 100-pound deer through the woods when you are lost.

If the blood trail starts to zig zag, you may be near the end. Deer often start to stagger and weave just before they succumb. A sudden loss of the bloodtrail could mean that the heart has stopped. If so, it will stop pumping blood. Don't give up. Stay with the trail; your deer could be close by.

Sometimes, no matter how careful you are or how hard you look, you cannot find signs. If this happens, then go back to your last marked blood sign. Start looking over again. Proceed very slowly. If you simply cannot find any sign, then start from the last sign and move in semi-circles cutting back and forth across the general direction the deer was moving in. Once at night, I followed an extremely hard trail for about 70 yards. It took two hours to cover that distance and then all the signs ended. I decided it would be best to return the next day. At first light, I was back at my last marked blood sign. After searching for 30 minutes, I could still find no sign. I started moving in semi-circles back and forth across in the general direction that my markers indicated the deer was moving. About 30 yards out, I hit the blood sign again. Twenty-five yards further, I found my deer. This technique will pay off. Don't give up. Stay with it. I have found that deer will keep fairly well on cool nights when the temperature is around 40 degrees. If you hunt when the nights will be warm enough to spoil the meat, you should limit how late you will hunt.

**W**hen you locate your deer, don't run wildly up and start admiring him. The deer may not be dead. Those hooves are sharp and can inflict serious injury to the careless hunter. Touching the eye with a suitably long stick is a good test. If the animal does not flinch, blink or otherwise move, it's probably safe to approach. Another word of caution: watch out for that broadhead when you start cleaning your deer.

Blood-trailing is often a misunderstood and overlooked part of bowhunting and hunting in general. Any hunter, no matter what his choice of weapon, who is determined never to lose an animal should familiarize himself with blood-trailing. Patience and the proper attitude, combined with a basic knowledge of blood-trailing, are all it takes to be an effective blood-trailer. You don't have to have a sixth sense to follow a deer. Try it out and enjoy those venison dinners. Safe hunting. □

*Mike Benedetti of Richmond has been bowhunting for eight years and is a certified instructor in the Bowhunter Education Program.*

by Joan Cone

# A Perfect Combination

*Game combines with biscuit mix to make some simple and delicious meals.*



Photos courtesy of General Mills

Who would have thought that 52 years after the creation of Bisquick, cooks would still be using this same biscuit mix? Modern cooks have discovered many other creative ways to use this versatile mix.

Since I'm always looking for improved wild game recipes, I've discovered many delicious dishes can be made by combining game and biscuit mix. These recipes are some of my favorites.

## Cabbage Patch Stew

*1 pound ground venison  
2 medium onions, thinly sliced  
1½ cups coarsely chopped cabbage  
½ cup chopped celery  
1 can (16 ounces) stewed tomatoes  
1 can (15½ ounces) kidney beans  
1 cup water  
1 teaspoon salt  
¼ teaspoon pepper  
1 to 2 teaspoons chili powder*  
*Dumplings*

If ground venison has not had fat added to it, melt 2 tablespoons of beef fat or oil in skillet. Cook and stir ground

venison in Dutch oven until brown; drain. Add onions, cabbage and celery; cook and stir until vegetables are light brown. Stir in tomatoes, kidney beans (with liquid), water, salt, pepper and chili powder. Heat to boiling; reduce heat.

Prepare Dumplings according to recipe below. Drop by spoonfuls onto boiling stew. Cook uncovered over low heat 10 minutes. Cover and cook 10 minutes. Sprinkle dumplings with paprika if desired. (Serves 5 to 6)

### DUMPLINGS

Mix 2 cups biscuit mix and 2/3 cup milk until soft dough forms. Drop by spoonfuls onto hot meat or vegetables in boiling stew (do not drop directly onto liquid). Makes 10 to 12 dumplings.

## Impossible Squirrel Or Rabbit Pie

2 cups cut-up cooked squirrel, rabbit or wild turkey  
1 jar (4½ ounces) sliced mushrooms, drained  
½ teaspoon salt  
1 cup shredded natural Swiss cheese  
1½ cups milk  
¾ cup biscuit baking mix  
3 eggs

Heat oven to 400°. Lightly grease pie plate, 10 x 1½ inches. Sprinkle game meat, mushrooms, salt and cheese in pie plate. Beat remaining ingredients until smooth, 15 seconds in blender on high speed or 1 minute with hand beater. Pour into pie plate. Bake until golden brown and knife inserted half-way between center and edge comes out clean, 30 to 35 minutes. Let stand 5 minutes before cutting. Refrigerate any remaining pie. (Serves 4 to 5)

This recipe and the one at right call for cut-up, cooked squirrel or rabbit. If you have a pressure cooker, place squirrels or rabbits in cooker with 1 cup water and cook under 15 pounds' pressure

for 20 minutes or until meat is fork tender; remove meat from bones. Two cups cut-up, cooked wild turkey can be substituted for squirrel or rabbit.

## Tomato-Venison Stew With Biscuits

2 pounds venison stew meat, cut into 1-inch pieces  
1 medium onion, chopped  
2 tablespoons vegetable oil  
1 can (4 ounces) mushroom stems and pieces  
1 can (16 ounces) whole tomatoes  
1 can (6 ounces) tomato paste  
2½ cups hot water  
1 tablespoon sugar  
1½ teaspoons salt  
¼ teaspoon pepper  
1 bay leaf  
½ teaspoon dried thyme leaves  
¼ teaspoon dried marjoram leaves  
2 cups thinly sliced carrots  
2 cups sliced celery  
¼ cup cold water  
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour  
2 cups biscuit mix  
1/3 cup butter or margarine, melted  
1 cup dairy sour cream

Cook and stir venison and onion in oil in Dutch oven until meat is brown. Stir in mushrooms (with liquid), tomato paste, hot water, sugar, salt and pepper. Heat to boiling, stirring occasionally; reduce heat. Cover and simmer, stirring occasionally, until meat is almost tender, about 1½ hours. Add bay leaf, thyme, marjoram, carrots and celery. Cover and simmer 30 minutes. Mix cold water and flour until smooth; gradually stir into venison mixture. Heat to boiling, stirring constantly. Boil and stir 1 minute; reduce heat.



Heat oven to 450°. Mix remaining ingredients until soft dough forms; beat vigorously 20 strokes. Drop by spoonfuls onto hot venison mixture. Bake until biscuits are brown, about 10 minutes. (Serves 5 to 6).

## *Biscuit-Topped Squirrel Or Rabbit Casserole*

2 tablespoons butter or margarine  
¼ cup biscuit baking mix  
1 teaspoon salt  
¼ teaspoon ground sage  
1 cup squirrel stock or water  
1 cup milk  
1 chicken bouillon cube (use only with water—not with stock)  
2 cups cut-up, cooked squirrel, rabbit or wild turkey  
1 package (10 ounces) frozen mixed vegetables, thawed  
½ cup sliced celery  
2 teaspoons instant minced onion  
2 cups biscuit baking mix  
½ cup cold water  
¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese  
1 tablespoon snipped parsley

½ teaspoon paprika

Heat oven to 425°. Heat butter in 3-quart saucepan over low heat until melted. Stir in ¼ cup baking mix, salt and sage until smooth. Gradually stir in 1 cup stock or water, milk and bouillon cube if used. Heat to boiling, stirring constantly. Boil and stir until thickened. Stir in cooked game meat, mixed vegetables, celery and onion; reduce heat.

Mix 2 cups biscuit mix and ½ cup water until soft dough forms; beat vigorously 20 strokes. Gently smooth dough into ball on floured, cloth-covered board. Knead 5 times. Roll dough about ½ inch thick. Cut into 9 biscuits with a floured 2-inch biscuit cutter. Pour meat mixture into ungreased square pan, 9 x 9 x 2 inches. Place biscuits on meat mixture. Mix remaining ingredients; sprinkle over biscuits. Bake until golden brown, 10 to 15 minutes. (Serves 4 to 5)

## *Cheeseburger Pie*



1 cup biscuit baking mix  
¼ cup cold water  
1 pound ground venison  
2 teaspoons instant minced onion  
½ teaspoon salt  
¼ teaspoon pepper  
2 tablespoons biscuit baking mix  
1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce  
2 eggs  
1 cup small curd creamed cottage cheese  
2 medium tomatoes, sliced  
1 cup shredded cheddar cheese

Heat oven to 375°. Mix 1 cup biscuit mix and the water until soft dough forms; beat vigorously 20 strokes. Gently smooth dough into ball on floured cloth-covered board. Knead 5 times. Roll dough 2 inches larger than inverted pie plate, 9 x 1¼ inches. Ease into plate; flute edge if desired.

Cook and stir ground venison until meat is brown; drain. Stir in onion, salt, pepper, 2 tablespoons biscuit mix and Worcestershire sauce. Spoon onto pie crust. Mix eggs and cottage cheese; pour over venison mixture. Arrange tomato slices in circle on top; sprinkle with cheddar cheese. Bake until set, about 30 minutes. (Serves 4 to 5)

*Joan Cone of Williamsburg is the author of Fish and Game Cooking and Easy Game Cooking.*



# Awareness, Ethics and Safety

The hunter education program  
is teaching all three.

by Jennifer G. Hensley

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There are the arrogant and the ignorant who will never attend a Hunter Education Program. If you fit into either of these categories, you probably would not be reading this article, so I will assume that you are interested in this very vital part of our Virginia Game Commission's education division. The program is sponsored by the Game Commission in cooperation with the National Rifle Association.

Not so long ago, you rarely heard of these programs, but now they are widely available. The 21-year old program has currently taught well over 320,000 students of all ages. However, Virginia contains 5,000,000 people, eight percent of whom purchase hunting licenses, thus spending 4,500,000 days afield, and more than \$100,000,000 annually in pursuit of their sport. Taking all of this into consideration, Virginia sportsmen (and women) deserve the best in their hunter education program, and they are getting it. New equipment and dramatic films, plus the volunteer instructor program are good indicators of the concern that the Commission has for the future of Virginia's outdoorsmen and their sport.

Not only concerned with safety, the program also teaches hunting ethics and wildlife identification and management. The course is available through your local hunter education program coordinator or local game warden at various times of the year. The only stipulation is a minimum number of people must sign up for the course (usually 12) to warrant bringing in the equipment. The course is definitely not restricted to hunters. Whether you are an experienced hunter or

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**"Not only concerned with safety, the program also teaches hunting ethics and wildlife identification and management."**

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just beginning, whether your father, brother, or your spouse hunts, this course is for you.

And firearm safety is not just the responsibility of the hunter and avid sportsman, but anyone who keeps a firearm for any reason.

Make your safety program a neighborhood affair. Get family and friends together at the local rescue squad or firehouse. All you need is enough interest, two nights of your time, and a suitable location. The instruction materials are terrific, ranging from a wide assortment of firearms to films

that capture the interest of even the most apathetic students.

Attending the program with your family may be one of the most caring decisions you ever make. If this course prevents just one incident from being carried into the danger zone, it is worth the time and effort of everyone involved in the safety program: the student, the instructor, the local game warden.

The hunter education program involves more than teaching safety afield, although that is certainly an important element. If you develop a sense of awareness and good ethics as well as safety, you are stacking the odds in favor of a safe and happy hunting experience.

Awareness is developed by letting your imagination carry you into what could happen in a given incident, and furthermore, to help you project what the results of your actions will be. For example: picture a groundhog hunter, and a groundhog in front of a pond; a bus is moving down a road about a quarter of a mile away. By being aware of the body of water and the probable path of the bullet, your eye then travels on to the logical secondary (and unintentional) target: the bus. Without this awareness, you might have taken this shot.

Using the same thought process, picture a loaded gun in reach of a child, or even unloaded but with the bullets nearby. What a challenge to a child who loves to put things together!

Common courtesy in the field does not seem to be asking too much of a sportsman. Never shoot or destroy personal property such as posted signs or fences. This type of action causes friction between a landowner and a hunter to begin with. Also a matter of concern is absolutely ignoring a posted sign and hunting anyway. What gives you the right to trespass on another person's property? To be able to hunt on someone else's land is a *privilege* which he may or may not grant you; it is not your *right*. Does a complete stranger (who, I might add, is armed) have the right to be on your property, for whatever reasons? Respect the privacy of others. That's part of ethical hunting.

A little effort on your part might get you permission to hunt on posted property. Get to know the landowner; perhaps offer your help on some heavy duty jobs such as haying or even cleaning out the stables! If by chance you do get permission to hunt, return the favor. Let him know when you will be hunting his area, and if you have a good day, offer him some of your game. Doesn't this make more sense than antagonizing him?

What about ethics concerning your fellow hunter? Again, common courtesy is a start. But sometimes you have to go the extra mile. Suppose that you are in the right, but you have run into a rather obnoxious fellow who either says you messed him up and killed his game, or he flatly states that he killed the game which you are about to field dress. There are no set rules in a situation like this, except to play it cool. Hot

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heads and firearms are a dangerous mixture! If discussion is not sufficient, offer to share your kill, or better yet, call a game warden and let him decide what is fair. In a situation like this, you have to be your own judge, and if you have killed a trophy, it is going to make it even more difficult to deal with. Stay cool!

Recently we had a visiting hunter with us in Highland County on the last day (doe day) of the deer season. After a very successful morning we began to compare our kills. One big deer had already been dragged down a ridge, and there were a few more men and deer to be rounded up. Leaving the one doe lying field dressed at the base of the ridge, we climbed back up to where the truck was parked and picked up the other deer. We were hunting with the owner who had not previously posted his land, and he assured us that he knew everyone around, and no one would bother this deer. Reaching the bottom of the ridge a half hour later, we found no trace of the doe. And the deer that was stolen belonged to the fellow who had traveled 14 hours to hunt with us!

The result: the landowner posted his land and the out-of-stater went home without his deer (although we did share our kill with him). In just one incident, landowner-hunter relations were damaged beyond repair, an out-of-state friend got a very low opinion of Virginia sportsmen, and an otherwise beautiful day was ruined. Good ethics are as essential as safety.

It can be a bit "sticky" to say for the first time, "Please keep that muzzle out of my face," but it's better to risk offending someone than winding up a hunting accident statistic. After a hunter safety course, you should be keenly aware of safe and unsafe hunting practices, but this does not mean that you will never encounter one of the arrogant or the ignorant. A few years ago, I came out of a wooded area onto an old logging

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**"It's better to risk offending someone than winding up a hunting accident statistic."**

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road to find a man whom I usually try to avoid because of his poor hunting habits. The father and leader of the group, he was leaning on the side of his pickup and resting the barrel of his gun on the tailgate. Three times, one of his sons gingerly moved the barrel away from his chest, and each time the old man would slide it back around. I left the scene as gracefully—and quickly—as I could, feeling pretty sorry for

the sons. Just two days later, I was coming out of the woods in a steady rain and I stopped to watch some does that were browsing nearby. All at once, someone started shooting at the does, and as they ran right for me, I began to feel like a plastic duck in a shooting gallery! I jumped behind a large pine tree and started bellowing. Finally, blessed silence. After making sure that the fellow knew that I was a human being, I made my appearance. Whom should I find but the oldest son of the "man" of my previous encounter. He was shooting a .270 with open sights. It was pouring down rain and visibility was poor, but his first words were "Did you see that six point buck I was shooting at? I think I hit him!" Knowing there were only does in the bunch since I was practically grazing with them, I offered to help him find his wounded "buck." He then said maybe he missed him, but being the good sport I am, I insisted on helping him look, knowing that if we found anything, it wasn't going to have even a nubbin. We found no sign of blood and he did not want to push his luck, so he insisted that we look no further. My one question to him at that point was, "If you could see well enough to count six points without the help of a scope, why couldn't you see me in all my orange glory coming right at you?" Moral of the story: Be sure of your target (*safety*), be aware of your background (*awareness*), and shoot only legal game (*ethics*). *Safety, awareness, and ethics.*

The worst part of the story is that the father obviously taught his sons everything he knew about hunting, a fact he boasted of on many occasions. This brings home another important point about the hunter education program: the part the school systems play in your area. The only chance some youngsters have to learn firearm safety is through the hunter education programs in the schools; please, let your local school board know that you wholeheartedly support hunter education in the schools. Sometimes it is hard to convince them that this is an important way for a student to spend his time.

If all of this does not stir your interest in attending a hunter education program, consider this: although we would rather teach hunter education to a voluntary audience, if you are going outside Virginia to hunt, remember that 34 of the 50 states now require that you complete a hunter education course and be certified before issuing you a license to hunt in their state. The majority of the states already recognize the significance of hunter education. It would be in your best interest to get the course behind you, not only from a safety standpoint, but to simplify matters if you do decide to go on a hunting trip.

Remember: think *safe*, be *aware*, and shoot *ethically*. □

*Jennifer Hensley of Grottoes is a volunteer instructor in Virginia's hunter education program.*

# No Closed Season

It's always open season for hikers, so whether you're hiking to something, or just hiking for its own sake, keep these tips in mind.



Lou Hinshelwood

Virginia's fishermen, hunters, canoeists, skiers, and surfers all have some seasonal limits on their favorite recreation. Hiking, though, is always in season. Hiking's an end in itself for enthusiasts who thrive on the physical exertion and find satisfaction in its basic simplicity. It's a means to another end for some outdoor people: the sportsman who scouts areas for future hunting or fishing trips, the birders and wildflower lovers who identify a variety of species along the trail, the families and friends who enjoy a day's outing together away from the pressures of their usual environment. For most hikers, though, the pleasure comes from a combination of the physical exhilaration, the solitude, and the sensory stimulation of the sights, sounds, and smells encountered along the trail.

Hiking requires no special skills, but a successful hike depends on planning that takes into consideration the season, the weather, and the companions. (The nature photographer and the man who wants to maintain the pace to ensure maximum cardio-vascular benefit make poor hiking companions.)

The season helps determine both the type of terrain and the length of the hike. Virginia's humid summers dictate hikes that are moderate in terms of both difficulty and distance. Longer and more strenuous hikes should be made in spring and fall when cooler weather and long hours and daylight lure you on.

In the spring, try to include a variety of elevations so you can see more species of wildflowers. Be sure to plan a hike past waterfalls when the spring rains have brought them to their peak volume. In fall, choose an area where red maples and sour gums provide their vivid colors. Winter hikes should be planned to take advantage of views and vistas usually hidden by foliage or trails that are heavily traveled during milder seasons.

Considerations far beyond the weather forecast and the dictum "be prepared for extremes of temperature and always carry a poncho" should affect your choice of hikes in every season. An important point to remember is that mountain streams may be difficult or impossible to cross after a few days of steady rain. (One group spent nearly an hour walking upstream to find a place to cross a rain-swollen river and then

had to walk back downstream on the other side to locate the trail opposite the normal crossing.)

After a hard rain—or a thaw—trails in stream valleys may be very muddy and should be avoided in favor of trails on rockier terrain. Remember, too, that a winter rain at low elevations may well mean several inches of snow in the mountains.

In windy weather you will probably be more comfortable if you stay off exposed bluffs and ridges. Mountain hollows or areas sheltered by evergreens are good places to hike on a windy, bitter cold day. When it's hot, seek out the mountain crest trails where breezes blow through the trees

or hike along a rushing stream.

In spring and summer an unfavorable forecast needn't make you change your plans. Hiking in a gentle or even moderate rain isn't at all unpleasant; the sound of rain falling on the leaves and the droplets caught in spider webs or shining on the wildflowers make up for minor discomfort and inconvenience and on a foggy day you are more likely to see wildlife. Since the air is still and sounds are muted, the animals are slower to sense your presence.

Children are frequent hiking companions for many of us. Careful planning is a must if a hike is going to be a pleasure for anyone in a group that includes them. Children rarely really tire, but they do get bored. Nature trails, with "the next stop" an ever-beckoning goal, are custom-made for children, but they are usually strolls rather than hikes.

If you are looking for a day's outing, try to plan a hike along a stream where the kids can stop and build a dam or splash for a while now and then. It will do a lot for their day, and yours too. So will planning a hike through an area where berries grow: wild strawberries in late spring, blackberries in summer, and then blueberries in late summer and early fall. When all else fails, call a "gorp stop" if spirits begin to flag. (Adding banana chips and carob-covered walnuts or sunflower seeds to the usual "good old raisins and peanuts" makes a tasty trail mix.)

If your hiking companions are adults you'd like to chat with along the trail, choose a forest road, fire road, or jeep trail so you can walk side by side. If you are introducing friends to hiking, think of their interests. To entice the history buff,

plan a hike in one of Virginia's battlefield parks. To please the explorer-at-heart, try to arrange a route that passes an abandoned mine or perhaps an overgrown cemetery.

Whenever you're in charge of organizing a group hike, pick a trail you are familiar with, preferably one with some special feature. But when you return to a trail you've hiked before, keep in mind that it may look quite different in another season. Take your map and compass; you don't want to be unsure of the way because the trail "doesn't look right." Remember, too, that last winter's open trail may be clogged with stinging nettles in August, and the trail you stepped briskly along one afternoon during leaf season may be an all-day struggle when it's covered with eight inches of crusted snow.

Once you have decided how far you want to hike, how strenuous you want your hike to be, and what special features such as wildflowers, waterfalls, or views you'd like to see—and how far you're willing to drive to get there—you're ready to make your final selection. So how do you decide? That's where a selection of maps and guidebooks comes in handy.

Local and regional hiking clubs have published a variety of maps and guidebooks ranging in scope from a series of seven maps and three volumes containing a description of the stretch of Appalachian Trail that passes through Virginia, to guides to specific areas in the national forests, to collections of circuit hikes. Local and regional parks usually have some type of map or brochure that outlines hiking opportunities, and of course, USGS quadrangle maps may be ordered.

While a good map will help you determine the steepness of the terrain, the distance, and the degree of maintenance to expect from a trail, there is no substitute for reading a guidebook to get an accurate idea of what the hike will be like. Most guides contain information of historic interest and notes about the flora and fauna of the area the trails pass through, as well as a detailed description of the route.

Often the mention of a magnificent hemlock forest, or that wildlife is often sighted in the area, or that persimmons may be found along the trail in autumn may influence your choice of a trail. More important, you may find cautions or tips that can save you considerable trouble or discomfort. You may be told to carry extra water because there are no springs or streams where you could fill your canteen and drop in a purification tablet. You may be warned that a particular trail is replete with poison ivy, or that an exposed, rocky crest should be avoided in icy weather.

One group of hikers was saved a lot of trouble because the leader read in the description of a circuit hike that there were four river crossings within a mile or so that must be waded. By packing along sneakers, towels, and plastic sacks for the wet stuff, no one had to wade barefooted, figure out how to dry their feet before putting their socks back on and lace up their boots again four different times. They traded that time-consuming business for the minor inconvenience of sloshing along in wet sneakers between the crossings. But suppose they had chosen this circuit hike in January and hadn't read about the river crossings. They'd have had little choice but to retrace their steps back up the mountain the long, steep way instead of completing the circuit.

In addition to careful planning with map and guidebook, you can maximize your hiking pleasure and minimize the inconvenience if you:

- Plan you hike so the most strenuous section is walked early in the day when you're fresh.

- Keep some plastic garbage bags or a plastic sheet in your pack to sit on at lunch time in wet weather or after a snow. (If you've ever had to eat standing up and been unable to sit down to rest all day because every rock and log was blanketed in four inches of soft snow, you'll appreciate this tip.)
- Take a small plastic bag for your lunch garbage so it won't stain your pack.
- Know the dates of hunting seasons if you hike on public lands.
- Always check the map scale when you're figuring the trail mileage. (It isn't always an inch to the mile.)
- If you wear glasses, a hat with a visor comes in handy when it's raining or snowing.
- Don't lead a hike to a waterfall during a prolonged dry spell.
- Use a stick to give you an extra balance point when you have to cross a stream on a log or stepping stones.
- If you use a hiking stick along the trail, keep track of which end's up so you won't accidentally grasp the end that's been in poison ivy.
- For greater solitude or a better chance of spotting wildlife, avoid trails with many access points where hikers may enter. Get an early start on the most popular trails (you can judge a trail's popularity by the size of the parking lot at the trail head) or, better yet, hike them off season.

And one last caution: hiking may be habit forming. Some compulsive types decide to "do" all the blue-blazed trails in Shenandoah, or the entire trail system on the Massanutten, or all the hikes listed in their favorite guidebook. Some even decide to do the whole Big Blue or the Appalachian Trail in Virginia devoting a day each weekend to hiking it segment by segment.

But whether as an end in itself, as a means to the ends of the nature lover or sportsman, or for a change of pace and a chance to spend a day outdoors, hiking can be rewarding recreation for any season and almost any kind of weather.

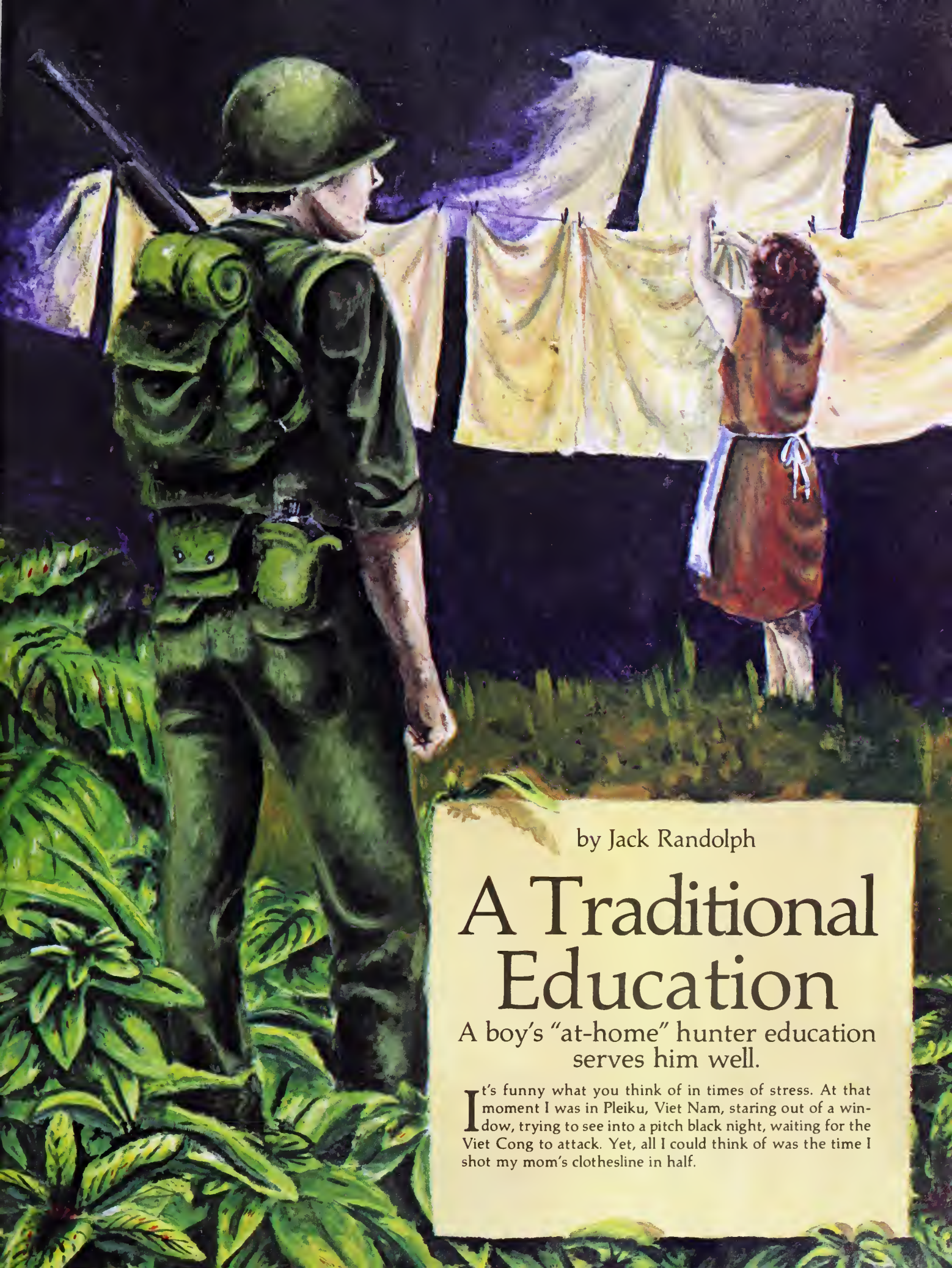
(For a price list of maps and guidebooks, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to: Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, 1718 N Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20038.) □

*Editor's Note: We'd like to add a couple of things to the author's list. A small first aid and survival kit should be part of your hiking gear. You can be injured anywhere, and getting lost or into a survival situation does not have to happen in the wilds of Alaska or the Sahara Desert to be dangerous. The kit does not have to be large to do the job. A few simple items can keep you comfortable if the going gets rough.*

*For most short hikes, the inexpensive little first aid kit that you can buy at the drug store will do. Survival gear should include certain basics. Matches: A fire can save your life but making one without matches is often more than you can do when you are in trouble. Put matches in a waterproof container. Take some nylon line. The braided variety is more useful than monofilament for making snares and tying things, and both will do for fishing. You probably won't catch anything with the snare, but it will give you something to do until help arrives. You might also include the following in your kit: a knife, flashlight, food (candy bars, etc.) and some extra clothing. And as the author mentioned, map and compass.*

*As with any boating, camping, hunting, or hiking trip, it's a good idea to leave word with someone concerning your plans, and your expected time of return.*

*Carolyn Reeder's articles on hiking have appeared in previous issues of Virginia Wildlife. Mrs. Reeder and her husband are avid hikers and are members of the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club.*



by Jack Randolph

# A Traditional Education

A boy's "at-home" hunter education serves him well.

**I**t's funny what you think of in times of stress. At that moment I was in Pleiku, Viet Nam, staring out of a window, trying to see into a pitch black night, waiting for the Viet Cong to attack. Yet, all I could think of was the time I shot my mom's clothesline in half.

The clothesline wasn't a total loss. A pair of cock pheasants was hanging in the storeroom, but at age 12 I was having a terrible time deciding if Mom would consider them adequate compensation for her clothesline. The difficulty was, this wasn't just an old cotton rope line. It was a brand new plastic-coated one that was to last a lifetime. Obviously, the manufacturer hadn't counted on small boys and big shotguns.

It all started innocently enough. I had decided to forego an afternoon's hunting to listen to the Army-Navy game on the radio. From where I sat in the living room I had a good view of our garden and the big fields that lie beyond. Unfortunately for all concerned, the two cock birds picked halftime to visit the garden. Scratch two pheasants and one clothesline.

As it proved out, the pheasants, while appreciated, were not considered adequate compensation. That ruined clothesline was not the first and far from the last gray hair Mom would suffer as a result of my outdoor escapades.

Gosh, it was dark out there. I can't remember any place in the world darker than Viet Nam. I fingered the weapon someone pressed into my hands when the lights went out as the alert sounded. I had never handled one like it before; in fact, I had yet to see it in the light.

Despite the lack of formal introduction, I knew I had met this weapon's ancestors years before. In the dark, my exploring fingers found all of the right things in the right places. It was put together exactly like a single-barrel shotgun, except the barrel was as big around as an automobile exhaust pipe. I recognized it as a grenade launcher, a relatively new weapon in the mid-sixties.

My first gun was a single-barrel 12-gauge. I remembered the campaign I waged to convince Mom that I was old enough to own a gun and hunt. I thought I was being very subtle. She read the play all the way.

Having no father in our house left Mom alone with all of the decisions. It was easier for her with my two sisters, but for a woman, raising a boy can be tricky. Years later Mom told me that she didn't want to produce a sissy, but she didn't want me to get hurt either.

She wasn't enthused about football, but she never denied me the opportunity to play. As for guns, she said that she knew that I should know how to use them. World War II was building then, and she felt I had better be prepared for whatever the future held. I'm still proud of the way she dealt with the problem.

One morning she woke me earlier than usual and informed me that, instead of going to school, I was to go with her to work at the Belle Meade Quartermaster Depot near Somerville, New Jersey. On the drive from our home near Highstown, she told me that she knew I would be asking for permission to hunt this year, but before she made up her mind she wanted me to spend a day with the security guards at her depot. They promised Mom that they would teach me how to handle guns safely.

There were no hunter education courses in those days, but those guards did a pretty good job on me. Before the day was

over, I had fired a shotgun, field stripped and assembled it, cleaned it and knew the names of the parts. Safety was drilled into me so firmly that I had more than a little new-found respect for guns when Mom picked me up. The major in charge gave me high marks, and the first hurdle was crossed. On the way home Mom gave me permission to hunt so long as I bought my own license and shells and secured my own gun.

That night in Viet Nam was my first in a combat situation. I had been anxious about this moment since entering the Army 14 years earlier. I was afraid that I would be so gripped with fear that I could not function. I was pleased that evening to find that I had unconsciously allowed my hunting instincts to take over. I was "seeing" through the darkness with my ears. It was like being on a deer stand with every sense fine-tuned for the snap of a twig or the rustle of leaves that would betray the approach of a cautious buck. I wondered how the others in the room were coping with the situation?

Back in basic training those of us who had hunted or trapped before had a definite edge on fellows who were inexperienced with guns and the outdoors. There's a lot more to learn about the outdoors than shooting. I had done considerable trapping, too.

On the trapline I had learned how to read sign and how to hide my own to avoid trap and fur thieves. I had learned how to set deadfalls and snares, how to stay dry when it was wet, and how to stay warm when it was cold. I learned how to find my way in the woods and not to panic when I found myself in a quaking bog or when I dumped the canoe over at daybreak in near-zero weather miles from the nearest road.

It was during basic training that I learned how well my outdoor skills had prepared me for the military. While other trainees who had no experience with guns were having problems with sight pictures, trigger squeeze, windage and elevation, those of us who had plinked at groundhogs had

*Continued on page 35*



## NHF Day Theme

# Sportsmen Asked To Pass On Outdoor Traditions

Saturday, September 25, 1982, will mark the 11th annual observance of National Hunting and Fishing Day.

The theme of NHF Day this year, "Pass It On," urges the nation's more than 55 million hunters and fishermen to help pass on the outdoor tradition to the millions of young people and adults who have never had the opportunity to experience the out-of-doors as they have.

Each year, thousands of sportsmen volunteer their time to organize NHF Day activities to help make non-sportsmen more aware of the need to conserve America's natural and wildlife resources

and of the important role hunters and fishermen play in conservation.

NHF Day activities range from an "open house" at a sportsmen's club to a countywide sportsmen's jamboree involving dozens of sportsmen's clubs and conservation groups. Attendance can range from 20 at an "open house" to tens of thousands at a sportsmen's jamboree or an NHF Day program in a shopping center.

By making millions of non-sportsmen aware of the need for conservation and the contributions hunters and fishermen make to conservation, NHF Day has helped ensure a healthy future for the outdoors, wildlife and the outdoor sports.

The tremendous success of National Hunting and Fishing Day in carrying its conservation message to the public has been possible only because of the support it has received from the nation's sportsmen.

As NHF Day moves into its 11th year, that support is more important than ever before—each individual and every

club make a difference.

For more information on how you can participate in National Hunting and Fishing Day, write Bob Davis, NHF Day Headquarters, P.O. Box 1075, Riverside, CT 06878.

Here in Virginia, Governor Charles S. Robb issued the following proclamation:

*The fine traditions our sportsmen have developed in hunting and fishing reach deep into the history of our Commonwealth. For many years, those of our leading citizens who have been interested in the quality of outdoor sportsmanship have made major contributions to the quality of life in Virginia.*

*This year, Saturday, September 25, will be observed as National Hunting and Fishing Day. I invite all our citizens to reflect on that day on the meaning that hunting and fishing have had upon our outdoor sporting heritage.*

For information on the program to be held in Richmond on September 26 commemorating NHF Day, write to: Virginia NHF Day Observance, Box 11104, Richmond, Virginia 23230-1104

# Big Game Trophy Show Dates Announced

The Deer Park School in Newport News, Virginia will again be the site of the Eastern Regional Big Game Trophy Show Scheduled for Saturday, September 25, 1982. Deadline for entries in the contest is two o'clock in the afternoon on the 25th. Only trophies killed east of the Blue Ridge during the 1981-82 hunting

season are eligible for competition in the event. Persons wishing to enter must have the appropriate game tag as proof of eligibility.

The location of the Deer Park School is at the intersection of Jefferson Avenue and J. Clyde Morris Boulevard in Newport News, Virginia. For additional information pertaining to Eastern Regional Big Game Trophy Show contact James S. Harvey at either his office phone (804) 827-3200 or his home (804) 595-0026.

The Western Regional and State Big Game Trophy phase of the two contests will be held at the fairgrounds in Harri-

sonburg, Virginia on October 28-30, 1982. Deadline for entries in the State Contest is twelve o'clock noon on October 30, 1982. To be eligible in the Western Regional Contest, trophies must have been taken west of the Blue Ridge and be accompanied by the appropriate game tag.

Information pertaining to the Western Regional and State Big Game Contest may be obtained by writing to Marlin T. Alt, P.O. Box 1226, Harrisonburg, Virginia 22801, or by calling his office at (703) 434-5951. □

# Migratory Game Bird Seasons

## 1982-83 VIRGINIA REGULATIONS

To be used as a supplement to SUMMARY OF VIRGINIA GAME LAWS, 1982-83 SEASON which contains additional information on license requirements, license fees and general regulations governing hunting in Virginia as well as open seasons and bag limits on non-migratory game birds, game animals and furbearing animals. For information on waterfowl, see separate digest A-12

### DOVES

SEASON: September 4 - October 30—*Hunting permitted from 12 o'clock noon until sunset each day.*

December 20 - January 1—*Hunting permitted from one-half hour before sunrise until sunset each day.*

BAG LIMIT: 12 per day, 24 in possession.

### WOODCOCK

SEASON: November 1 - January 4.

BAG LIMIT: 5 per day, 10 in possession.\*

HOURS: from one-half hour before sunrise until sunset each day.

### SNIPE

SEASON: October 18 - January 31

BAG LIMIT: 8 per day, 16 in possession.\*

HOURS: From one-half hour before sunrise until sunset each day.

### RAILS

SEASON: September 11 - November 19.

HOURS: From one-half hour before sunrise until sunset each day.

BAG LIMITS: A total of 15 clapper rails and king rails counted together a day, 30 in possession\* and 25 sora and Virginia rails, counted together a day, 25 in possession.\*

### SPECIAL FALCONRY SEASON:

DOVE, WOODCOCK, RAIL

SEASON: September 20 - December 6, December 20 - 30.



### SNIPE:

SEASON: October 18 - January 31

BAG LIMIT (all falconry): 8 per day, 16 in possession.\*

HOURS (all falconry): From one-half hour before sunrise until sunset each day.

\*Possession limits apply to transportation of game killed on more than one day

## Virginia Highways Claim Deer

by Bob Gooch

Virginia's estimated population of approximately 400,000 white-tailed deer produces an annual hunting harvest of over 75,000 animals, placing the state among the top dozen deer hunting states in America.

Even the state's road kill exceeds the hunter take in a dozen other states. According to the Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries 2,361 deer were killed on the state's highways in 1981. This count was based on the actual number of deer picked up by road crews or reported to authorities. No doubt many others managed to stagger into the woods to die.

The all-time high for road kills in Virginia occurred in 1978 when 3,791 white-tails died on the state's highways.

The highest non-hunting kill occurred in 1973 when 5,725 animals died from traffic and miscellaneous causes such as trains, dogs, becoming entangled in fences, and others. Over 1,000 deer were killed by poachers that year and another 502 were destroyed because of crop damage. The illegal kill was down to 318 in 1981, but 460 animals were killed because of crop damage. □

## Hunting Outlook

Old Dominion deer hunters are coming off another record year and can look forward to a season at least as good as last year, possibly better. The Commission has adopted a regulation which provides for a two-deer limit in most counties west of the Blue Ridge. As a result of this change, sportsmen will have an increased opportunity for deer hunting. However, since there is no change in the number of doe days, it is doubtful that the new change will cause any significant increase in the western harvest. Eastern deer herds are continuing to expand and hunters should expect conditions equal to last year's excellent season.

The harvest of black bear, after a tremendous harvest last year, is expected to return to the previous norm of about 225 animals. Only 41 percent of last season's high harvest were females. This is not considered high and bear reproduction should continue to be good.

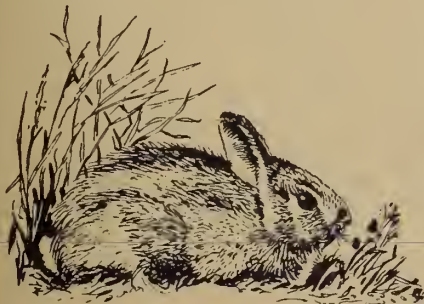
Early summer indications are that turkey broods are numerous throughout the state and another good hatch is expected. While there has been a return to better than normal rainfall in some areas, the extended cold, wet periods so hazardous to young turkeys have not occurred this spring. Recruitment as measured last fall was good statewide, especially in the northern part of the state, the central mountain region and the Tidewater area. Prospects for the fall season are very good.

Good to excellent mast production statewide last year was extremely beneficial to squirrel reproduction. Hunters should find more bushytails this fall than they have seen in many years.

Grouse hunters last year found more birds than in previous years. Considering the fine mast production of last year, carry-over and nesting is expected to be very good, extending the upward cycle of these fine game birds.

Quail hunting is always difficult to predict. Spring surveys point toward greater availability of birds than last year's hunting results would indicate. Barring weather conditions that could affect the birds, the prospects for this year are better than those for last year, when most quail nested late which resulted in lower than normal clutch sizes.

Rabbit populations vary from locality to locality and are difficult to forecast. As usual, rabbits appear to be numerous during the summer, but in the fall, rabbits, like gold, are where you find them. □



## Statewide Deer, Bear, and Turkey Harvest

County	1979 — 1980			1980 — 1981			1981 — 1982		
	Deer	Bear	Turkey	Deer	Bear	Turkey	Deer	Bear	Turkey
Accomack	213	0	0	296	0	0	259	0	0
Albemarle	1,178	12	214	1,298	22	286	1,453	46	182
Alleghany	955	8	232	850	9	327	1,072	21	284
Amelia	1,526	0	274	1,854	0	260	1,589	0	197
Amherst	887	4	197	973	10	197	1,106	14	147
Appomattox	788	0	328	792	0	245	650	0	144
Augusta	1,365	12	311	1,541	17	330	1,752	36	266
Bath	1,987	5	431	1,900	5	452	2,447	13	395
Bedford	1,242	4	138	1,478	3	243	1,719	18	217
Bland	690	7	118	601	8	196	789	9	200
Botetourt	1,295	23	292	1,199	13	371	1,289	23	366
Brunswick	1,109	0	127	1,059	0	155	995	0	116
Buchanan	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Buckingham	1,775	0	460	2,319	0	416	2,008	0	334
Campbell	288	0	147	315	0	165	270	0	86
Caroline	1,203	0	283	1,795	0	367	1,602	0	254
Carroll	129	0	0	175	0	0	252	0	118
Charles City	1,162	0	0	1,115	0	0	1,391	0	12
Charlotte	569	0	170	616	0	210	555	0	129
Chesapeake	422	1	0	396	3	0	430	5	0
Chesterfield	1,102	0	31	1,434	0	196	1,134	0	28
Clarke	277	0	24	232	0	28	307	0	43
Craig	1,044	3	90	1,049	10	216	1,275	17	238
Culpeper	498	0	100	614	0	90	539	0	95
Cumberland	1,257	0	261	1,589	0	258	1,366	0	246
Dickenson	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Dinwiddie	1,030	0	170	1,162	0	191	1,039	0	117
Essex	146	0	21	272	0	32	177	0	23
Fairfax	42	0	1	48	0	3	50	0	3
Fauquier	1,092	0	117	1,392	0	130	1,440	0	114
Floyd	233	0	0	188	0	0	252	0	43
Fluvanna	1,164	0	250	1,348	0	279	1,254	0	205
Franklin	500	0	30	555	0	25	657	0	63
Frederick	999	0	178	1,093	0	211	1,299	0	207
Giles	916	17	247	786	9	303	1,180	23	324
Gloucester	225	0	0	244	0	0	226	0	0
Goochland	888	0	149	991	0	187	1,032	0	140
Grayson	1,755	0	74	1,447	0	127	1,957	0	119
Greene	58	10	9	96	16	9	127	10	16
Greensville	553	0	1	601	0	2	604	0	0
Halifax	807	0	173	886	0	186	817	0	177
Hampton - Newport News(City)	214	0	0	281	0	0	182	0	0
Hanover	306	0	0	405	0	0	384	0	19
Henrico	340	0	0	423	0	0	386	0	0
Henry	85	0	0	113	0	0	146	0	9
Highland	1,245	6	207	1,201	4	242	1,538	6	154
Isle of Wight	856	0	0	1,103	0	0	900	0	0
James City	336	0	0	439	0	0	276	0	0
King & Queen	395	0	74	580	0	103	500	0	103
King George	505	0	0	595	0	0	602	0	0
King William	595	0	106	698	0	140	623	0	112
Lancaster	668	0	0	355	0	0	359	0	0
Lee	117	0	0	82	0	0	138	0	0
Loudoun	1,193	0	30	1,435	0	75	1,519	0	70
Louisa	888	0	208	990	0	222	792	0	198
Lunenburg	612	0	69	760	0	103	669	0	53
Madison	128	15	16	141	24	33	193	25	19
Mathews	66	0	0	80	0	0	46	0	0
Mecklenburg	530	0	0	514	0	0	514	0	0
Middlesex	109	0	0	102	0	0	54	0	3
Montgomery	272	3	117	242	3	153	301	5	139
Nelson	674	11	177	719	11	209	740	27	124
New Kent	1,060	0	0	1,142	0	0	1,475	0	25
Northampton	74	0	0	100	0	0	116	0	0
Northumberland	549	0	0	303	0	0	234	0	0
Nottoway	1,013	0	57	1,306	0	105	1,192	0	68
Orange	426	0	87	449	0	83	436	0	37
Page	452	13	84	426	9	77	521	18	76
Patrick	474	0	0	447	0	0	444	0	37
Pittsylvania	1,038	0	60	1,221	0	155	1,385	0	112
Powhatan	1,105	0	223	1,380	0	199	1,454	0	164
Prince Edward	834	0	200	1,112	0	173	970	0	164
Prince George	839	0	26	988	0	50	850	0	39
Prince William	454	0	74	419	0	58	427	0	42
Pulaski	333	2	90	284	0	88	364	0	89
Rappahannock	834	3	74	806	18	67	1,308	21	79
Richmond	638	0	0	483	0	0	391	0	0
Roanoke	99	0	34	136	0	58	115	0	32
Rockbridge	1,007	11	326	1,025	8	398	1,210	23	327
Rockingham	2,006	25	204	2,152	19	176	2,632	50	272
Russell	55	1	0	50	0	31	88	2	15
Scott	123	0	0	133	0	76	204	0	59
Shenandoah	1,740	5	360	1,733	5	308	2,223	5	305
Smyth	308	2	50	347	0	74	486	2	80
Southampton	3,252	0	0	3,330	0	0	2,772	0	0
Spotsylvania	561	0	65	619	0	61	514	0	55
Stafford	580	0	100	635	0	102	468	0	72
Suffolk	743	1	0	784	0	0	884	4	0
Surry	1,187	0	0	709	0	0	1,120	0	0
Sussex	1,766	0	0	2,000	0	0	1,864	0	0
Tazewell	116	4	29	146	3	63	171	3	55
Virginia Beach (City)	135	0	0	152	0	0	197	0	0
Warren	604	0	92	613	0	59	793	4	103
Washington	194	1	28	197	0	29	265	2	40
Westmoreland	236	0	0	250	0	0	219	0	0
Wise	79	0	0	90	0	97	90	0	79
Wythe	748	5	107	604	3	145	855	0	162
York	761	0	0	749	0	13	427	0	18
TOTALS	69,926	214	9,022	75,177	232	10,718	78,388	432	9,257

**Some people won't  
see the litter problem  
until it hits them  
in the face.**



**Start Thinking. Stop Littering.**

**V Virginia Division of Litter Control**

Department of Conservation and Economic Development  
Richmond/804-786-8679

## "Duck Stamp" Contest Opens

The Federal Government's 1982 "Duck Stamp" contest opened July 1st to select the design for the 1983-84 Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp. Prospective entrants may request copies of the contest rules and entry forms from the "Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Con-

test," U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.

Deadline for all entries is October 1st with contest judging to be held on November 4th at the Interior Department in Washington, D.C. (preceded by a preliminary round of screening on November 3rd if the number of entries warrants).

Beginning this year, entrants must pay an entry fee of \$20.00 at the time their designs are submitted. Use check or money order only.



**70% OF OUR  
WILD DUCKS  
ARE BORN  
IN A FOREIGN  
COUNTRY.**

Most of this continent's wild ducks are born in the wetlands of Canada, which are under threat of extinction. Revenues from Federal Duck Stamps can't help because law forbids their use outside the United States. That's why Ducks Unlimited is working to preserve Canadian wetlands. Send your tax-free contribution. Because if ducks have no home, America will have no ducks.

DUCKS UNLIMITED INC.,  
P.O. BOX 66300,  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60666



done it all before. I saw young men who had never fired a gun flinch so badly they couldn't hit the paper, much less the bullseye.

Setting and concealing mines and booby traps was not unlike trapping. We called upon these same skills, acquired on the trapline, to detect and avoid mines and booby traps set to catch us.

Perhaps most important was the ability of experienced outdoorsmen to cope with inclement weather, going without sleep and knowing that it was possible to keep going even when your legs told you that you couldn't take another step.

It was as quiet as it was dark. There was no distant hum of traffic or the sound of a train huffing in the distance. The perimeter was guarded by claymore mines. Most of us knew that it would probably be one of these mines that would signal the approach of the VC, if they ever came. I tried to bore holes through the darkness with my eyes as my mind traveled back in time to that distant home on the other side of the world.

It was Thanksgiving and there was nothing in the ice box. Mom was sick and had been laid off. Our only hope for saving the day lay in two shotgun shells and the certain knowledge that a blackberry bramble I had found was full of rabbits. As I set out, our neighbor's springer spaniel followed me.

The little spaniel loved to jump rabbits, and she had a ball in those blackberries. The problem was those smart rabbits were staying in the briar patch, and I had to wait for a certain shot. Finally, one broke out across a cornfield. That was his last mistake. Later, another tried the same trick. My last shell claimed the second cottontail. It was a proud lad who carried those two big rabbits into his house.

I wish I could say the rabbits saved the day, but Mom saw some little white nodules in them and pronounced them wormy. In retrospect I don't believe they were, but I cried that day as I buried those rabbits.

Someone once said that waiting was the worst part of combat. He was right. The tension of the wait wore us down. Two of us slept while two watched. When my turn to sleep came, I couldn't. Instead I traveled back to Jersey again.

Soon after that Thanksgiving, the trapping season opened. I had to quit school temporarily and had a four-day-per-week job helping on an egg truck. After taxes I brought home \$18.50, hardly enough for a family of four, even then. I hoped trapping would help.

I set three lines on three different streams. I asked Mom to drive me to two of the lines because I was not yet old enough to have a driver's license. She agreed, although she was skeptical that it would be worth the price of the gasoline.

It was cold business running those traps in the dark hours before work. Muskrats, I had heard, were bringing three dollars and I made most of my sets for them. Mom didn't think much of muskrats. She couldn't see how they could be worth anything. When I came back to the car, she'd ask if I had caught anything? I'd say, "A few 'rats," and she'd make a face.

On Friday of the first week of the season I caught a whopper raccoon. To Mom bigger was better. She was all excited and wanted to go to the fur buyer that evening.

When we went there, I hauled out the 'coon and a bagful of

muskrats. When I returned to the car, Mom asked, "What did you get for the raccoon?"

"Nine dollars," I replied.

I heard Mom sigh a disappointed, "oh."

"But I got a hundred twenty-five dollars for the 'rats," I added, shoving the wad of bills into her hands.

"How much?" she asked, a rare smile in her voice.

I repeated the amount as she looked at the cash under the domelight.

"You keep this," she said, passing a 20-dollar bill to me. "I wish you could keep it all."

My trapping success held up until well past the New Year when Mom returned to her work as a registered nurse. I guess it has become fashionable to think unkindly of trapping these days, but I can't help but feel a glow of pride when I reflect upon that winter. As for trapping, I'll always be thankful for the many lessons I learned on the trapline, and I hope many more young men will have the same opportunity.

No attack came that night, and many years have passed since then. My soldier suit hangs in the closet, a symbol of years of memories and deep personal pride. I have another job now, working with the Game Commission.

One of the pleasures of my job is answering the telephone and answering questions. Every now and then I receive a call from a concerned parent, worried over the possibility of his or her child being exposed to a hunter education program. Usually the parent is opposed to hunting and guns and doesn't want the child exposed to them either.

There are television sets in my home, too, and I understand their points of view. Deprived of their rural roots and having no first-hand experience with wildlife and guns, the modern urban parents cannot be blamed for their apprehensions. Knowing the barrage of misinformation they have been subjected to by the media in many forms, I am overcome with a sense of futility. Nothing I can say in a brief phone conversation will change their minds.

All I can say is that the course is voluntary. It is designed to teach safe gun handling, an understanding of wildlife and the laws that protect it. These courses, I point out, are designed to teach those who are inclined to hunt to do so safely and responsibly. In the event a child may be exposed to firearms in his home, I add, the course teaches proper respect for firearms and the dangers of careless gun handling.

I say the words, but I doubt if anyone is listening. So badly do I want to say, "Let the kid attend the course if he wants to. Let him judge hunting and guns for himself." Of course, I couldn't say this without upsetting the caller.

When I hang up the phone, I hope, as they do, that their child does not find himself in combat someday. Then I offer a silent thanks to my mother, a gutsy gal who let me follow my instincts. I also thank God that the caller was not my mother or my children's mother who, meaning well, would send her child into combat with anything less than it is possible to learn in order to survive. □

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Pass It On  
September 25, 1982



National Hunting  
and Fishing Day